Earthquakes: Earthquakes, locally called *indrist,* are a common phenomenon in Nuristan. From a geological point of view, Nuristan is situated in the collision zone on the northern border of the Indian subcontinent. The earthquakes occur when the tectonic plates of Central Asia and the Indian subcontinent collide.

Economy: Traditionally, animal husbandry, subsistence agriculture and forestry have been the main sources of income. Other sources of income are opium, wage labour, food aid and remittances from male family members working outside Nuristan, in addition to smuggling of consumer goods and precious stones, and illegal logging.

An Afghan millionaire living in France is building a USD5.5 million furniture factory in Nangarage. It will give employment to many locals (Asia pulse, 20 March 2006).

Education: According to Governor Tamim Nuristani, there are 152 schools in Nuristan, but only 20 have a building (The Pakistan Observer, 17 Sept. 2005). The vast majority of school-age children do not go to school. See Appendix 4. More girls than boys are out of school, and the gender gap widens with every grade. Very few Bari children go to school. There are no school-books in Nuristani languages. There is a scarcity of adequately trained teachers, especially female teachers. Teachers receive their low salaries on an irregular basis.

A few schools have been built in Nuristan during the past three years, but education facilities are still lacking in both quantity and quality, at all levels. During the Taliban period, many Nuristani boys were sent to *madrasa* in Pakistan, which provided them for years with free education, board and lodging until graduating as mullahs.

The Swedish Committee for Afghanistan (SCA) is supporting a primary school in Nangal Village in Kamdesh. Other NGOs supporting primary schools in Nuristan are the Afghan German Basic Education (AG BAS-Ed), the Nooristan Foundation, and the Social Development and Health Care Organisation (SDHCO). UNICEF provides teaching materials, school bags and some teacher training. USAID is funding the construction of 12 primary schools. See Appendix 5. A radio teacher training programme now reaching 65,000 teachers in all 34 provinces is also financed by USAID. WFP provides food for school children, women in literacy classes and teachers.

Few persons in Nuristan are literate. In 2002, UNHCR estimated the literacy rate in most districts to be below five per cent.

See also Chapter 10, Education.

Elections in 2005: See Chapter 3, The Wolesi Jirga and Provincial Council Elections in 2005.

Ethnic groups: Official data on the ethnic composition in Nuristan are not available.

The Nuristanis form the vast majority of the population. They are the descendants of the Kafirs (so called infidels) of Kafiristan (Land of Infidels) who were finally conquered by the Afghans,

under the leadership of Amir Abdur Rahman Khan, and converted to Islam in the 1890s by brute force, after centuries of resistance. Kafiristan was then re-named Nuristan (Land of Enlightment or Light).

The Nuristanis form more of a regional group of ethnic enclaves than one distinct ethnic group. Their immediate identification is usually with their valley, often identical with a linguistic region. They generally see themselves as Nuristanis only in a national, not local, context (Rubin, 2002). The major groups are called Kam, Kati, Presun and Wai. See also Languages, below.

For information about Baris, see Caste/class system above.

In addition, there are smaller ethnic groups of Pashais, Gujars and Kohistanis. The Gujars came from India during the 19th century. They are nomadic cattle-breeders who live on the upper slopes of the valleys. They speak a lowland Indian dialect. Their religion is Islam. For generations, the Gujars have had hostile relations with the Nuristanis due to fighting over pastures.

In areas bordering Kunar, there are Safis (ethnic Pashtuns). Their relations with the Nuristanis are often tense due to disputes over grazing rights and logging. Some other Pashtun groups of Kunar, such as the nomadic Meshwani (sometimes written Mushwani), are also traditional enemies of the Nuristanis for similar reasons.

Fauna:

Mammals: A large variety of mammals including mice, rats, long-tailed marmots, porcupine, flying squirrels, monkeys (*Rhesus Macaque*) in flocks of about twenty, brown bears, black bears, racoon dogs, large-eared pikas, otters, musk deers, wolves, snow leopards (*Uncia uncia*) and *Panthera pardus*, Marco Polo sheep, ibex, and Markhor (*Capra falconeri;* loved by the Nuristanis).

Birds: A rich bird-life including the Blue Whistling Thrush, the Brown Dipper, Cormorants, Wall Creepers, Slaty-headed Parakeets, Hoopoes, Paradise Flycatchers, Himalayan Pied Woodpeckers, Jungle Crows, Snowcocks, Monals (also called Impeyan Pheasant; they are loved by the Nuristanis and play an important role in Nuristani tradition) and Bearded Vultures.

Other: a profusion of butterflies, honey bees, dung beetles, fleas, lice and other pests; a great many fish, lizards and snakes. Poisonous snakes are especially common in and around the village of Kegal.

The above section on fauna is based primarily on Edelberg & Jones, 1979. It is likely that the fauna has changed a lot since the 1970s due to the rapid deforestation. FAO/UNHCR reported 80 per cent decrease in wild life in the newsletter UNHCR Return dated 1 March 2004.

Flora:

An abundance of wild flowers, including orchids, roses, tulips, purple-blue primulas, gentians, buttercups, pale blue giant harebells, purple-blue geraniums, dark pink dog roses, deep pink rugosas, purple vetch, speedwells, celandines and forget-me-nots. In addition, there are at least two types of wild rhubarb, wild parsley, mock strawberries and groves of rhododendron (Sandy Gall, 1989).

Food insecurity: According to the 2005 National Rural and Vulnerability Assessment (NRVA), most of Nuristan is seasonally food-insecure. The food aid from the World Food Programme (WFP) in 2006 consists of wheat, oil, pulses, salt and biscuits. The situation is aggravated by isolation during the winter due to heavy snowfall and lack of roads. See also Chapter 8, The National Rural and Vulnerability Assessments.

Forests: The Oak Zone, 1,300-2,100 m: several species of evergreen oak, mistletoe, ivy, olive tree, grapevines, figs, peaches, apricots, jujubes, persimmon, pomegranates and apples; laurel and almonds; walnut and mulberry.

The Coniferous Zone, 2,100-3,300m: cedar, pine, spruce and fir; mushrooms (called *kiran-xak*, 'earth cheese'); hazel and apple trees; elm, ash and rowan; poplar and birch trees; juniper cedar (Edelberg & Jones, 1979).

Illegal logging and smuggling of timber is a big business. Satellite photography by UNEP/UNOSAT shows that 60 per cent of the land in Nuristan was covered by forests and another 17 per cent by low density forests in 1977. Twenty-five years later, in 2002, the forest cover was 14 per cent and the low density forest cover was 20 per cent. According to UNDP (2005), "this process has resulted in local communities losing control of their resources to warlords, timber barons and foreign traders controlling illegal and highly lucrative logging operations."

Klimburg (2001) writes: "With the precious Himalaya cedars – majestic, straight growing trees – cut in great quantity and then exported to Pakistan and Arab countries the unique Nuristani environment becomes increasingly threatened."

A National Committee was formed in 2003 by Dr Yusuf Nuristani to create a National Park in the Nuristan region to protect biological diversity and prevent forest degradation. It is reported that the planning of this project has come to a halt.

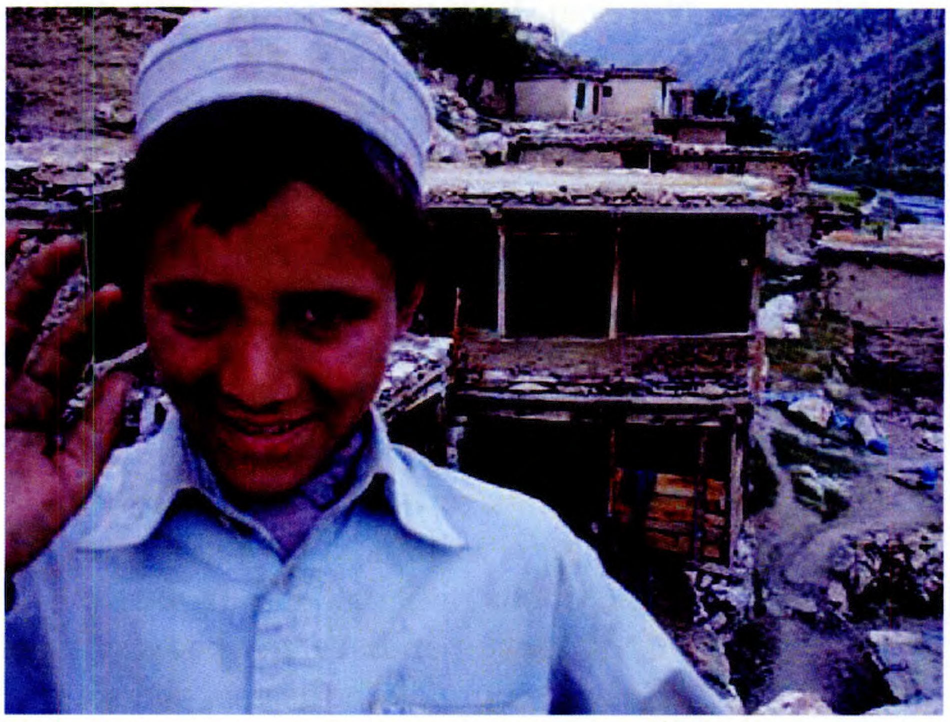
Trying to curb the illegal trade has failed so far because of the bribes paid to police and high-ranking officials, according to IWPR (29 March 2005).

Geology/Mineralogy: Granites, Precambrian gneisses, quartzites, micaschists, greenshists and phyllites are the most common rocks. In the lower Waigal, marble is abundant. Pegmatic minerals were found by Russian geologists in 1970. The pegmatites contain splendid crystals, especially of beryl, and of tourmaline, kunzite, aquamarine and morganite, especially in the Kantiwa fields. Rubies and emeralds are plentiful. According to the National Solidarity Programme (NSP) Headquarters, the Americans are mapping underground resources all over the country, presumably also in Nuristan.

Health: The most common medical problems and diseases are **reproductive health problems – the maternal mortality is extremely high, tuberculosis, acute respiratory infections in winter, diarrhoea in summer,** worm infestations, scabies, impetigo, goitre, typhoid, high levels of chronic or seasonal

malnutrition in some areas, back and leg problems due to heavy physical work, broken arms and legs, gunshots, mine wounds and burns. Malaria is a problem in low altitude areas. There are no data on HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. It is generally thought that the incidence of HIV/AIDS is still low. There is an enormous shortage of health facilities in Nuristan. See Appendix 2.
Since late 2005, **the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan (SCA)** is the implementing partner of the Ministry of Public Health for the **Basic Package of Health Services (BPHS)** in Nuristan.
Herbal remedies are common. See Appendix 1.
The Laghman PRT is providing some limited medical services. USAID is financing the construction of five medical clinics. See Appendix 3. See also Chapter 9, Health.

Housing:



Construction of houses in Parun, 2005. Photo: Axiom Film

In most valleys, arable land is so scarce that houses are built only where agriculture/terracing cannot take place. The houses are constructed on top of each other on extremely steep mountain slopes. The only flat exterior places are the roof tops, where fruits are dried, outdoor household tasks are performed and children play. One family's roof is another family's veranda. Homes are generally two-storied. The lower level contains storage rooms and stables; the upper floor is a large room where the family cooks, sleeps and receives guests. "One can climb all the way across a village from rooftop to rooftop, up and down a dozen ladders, and balancing precariously along narrow planks thrown across from one roof edge to another, without setting foot on the ground. This pattern is perhaps to be expected in a land where raiding was, until recently, an institution" (Jones, 1974).
The traditional building style of wooden scaffolds filled with stones and earth have an excellent sturdiness when earthquakes occur. Many new houses are built mainly in stone (less earthquake-resistant), with small windows and without verandas, to keep women in seclusion.

Hydro-electric power: Nowadays, many villages in the centre and in the east of Nuristan have small hydro-electric plants. Reportedly, the electricity is mainly used for lighting and ironing.

Irrigation: There are complex systems of carefully maintained irrigation canals with melting water from the mountains. Every spring the women have to clear and repair the canals. Disputes over water allocations are common in areas where there is a shortage of water, e.g. the Kamdesh–Kushtuz violent conflict which has been going on for generations. See also Clan/community feuds, above.

Languages: There are five Nuristani languages spoken by some fifteen ethnic groups:
- *vasi vari, also called Prasun,* is spoken in upper, middle and lower dialects in the Parun Valley;
- *kamkata viri, also called Kati,* is spoken in northern and western Nuristan, **Kati is the major Nuristani language**;
- *askunu viri, also called Ashkun,* is spoken in the middle Alingar and middle Pech Valleys, with several dialects;
- *kalasha ala, also called Waigali,* is spoken mainly in Waigal;
- *Tregami* is spoken in three villages in the Tregam Valley.

These languages are so called Indo-Iranian, also called Aryan languages (Strand, 2002).
The Norwegian linguist Georg von Munthe af Morgenstierne (1892-1978) carried out extensive research on the Nuristani languages. He showed that the link to Indian languages is stronger than the link to Iranian languages.
There is no written Nuristani language. Consequently, there are no schoolbooks in Nuristani languages.
Very few women have any knowledge of Dari or Pashtu. Some men are bilingual; in the east and south Pashto is the predominant second language, and in the north, it is Dari.

National Solidarity Programme (NSP): Facilitating Partners (FP) for the NSP are Afghan Aid in Barg-e-Matal and Kamdesh; and Madera in DoAb, Wama and Waigal. Mandol, Nangarage and Parun have not yet joined the NSP.

Opium poppy cultivation: In 2005, the area under opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan decreased by 21 per cent. Due to favourable weather conditions, however, the average opium yield per hectare increased by 22 per cent. This meant that the national harvest decrease was only marginal. In Nuristan, contrary to the national trend, the area under poppy cultivation increased by more than 100 per cent, from 764 hectares in 2004 to 1,554 hectares in 2005, a larger area than ever before. According to UNODC, the major poppy-growing district in Nuristan was Mandol, followed by Barg-e-Matal. In the neighbouring provinces, by contrast, the cultivation decreased sharply, mainly due to eradication programmes, in 2005: in Nangarhar by 96 per cent to 1,093 hectares, in Laghman by 90 per cent to 274 hectares, and in Kunar by 76 per cent to 1,059 hectares. UNODC (February 2006) predicts a decrease in opium poppy cultivation in Nuristan in 2006. See Chapter 6, The Opium Economy.

Population, settled - by district*: sex and sex ratio, 2005

Districts (Uluswali)	Males	Females	Total
Parun (provincial centre)	6,000	5,700	11,700
Noor Gram**	14,400	13,700	28,100
DoAb	3,300	3,500	6,800
Waigal***	9,000	8,000	17,000
Wama	4,900	4,700	9,600
Mandol	8,900	8,300	17,200
Kamdesh	10,900	11,000	21,900
Barg-e-Matal	6,700	6,700	13,400
Nuristan, Total	**64,100 ***	**61,600 ***	**125,700 ***

* Not including Ghazi Abad district (now officially in Kunar province) with 8,300 males and 8,000 females.
** Also called Nangarage district.
*** Sometimes called Want

Note 1. This table is based on **official data** from the Central Statistics Office (CSO) in Kabul. The latest data available, based on household listings, were received from Mr Abdul Rashid Fakhri, Director General of the CSO, in November 2005. **In the absence of a real census or other reliable sources of information, the figures above (and below) are rough estimates of limited reliability**. In June 2006, the CSO will start a national census in cooperation with UNFPA. The latest Afghan census was carried out in 1979, but the data from Nuristan are particularly unreliable as enumerators had very limited access to the area at that time. (In 1980, Louis Dupree described statistics on Afghanistan as "wild guesses based on inadequate data.")
Note 2. Contradictory figures: Governor Tamim Nuristani estimates the population of Nuristan to 300,000-350,000 persons. In the Wolesi Jirga and Provincial Council Elections in 2005, there were 124,583 registered voters in Nuristan (JEMB, 2005).

Nuristan is 100 per cent rural.

Population density: The province is sparsely populated. The population density is shown in Appendix 2, Nuristan Health Facilities, Catchments and Population Density, June 2005.

Provincial administration: Governor is Mr Mohd. Tamim Nuristani from Kantiwa. Deputy Governor is Haji Halim Nuristani, also from Kantiwa. The District Governors are appointed by the Ministry of Interior. The provincial administration in Nuristan is poorly developed, and the budget limited. The province is divided into seven districts and one provincial centre. The logistic problems are enormous.
Provinces are graded largely by population, but there are additional political factors influencing the assignation. Grade 1 is the largest, and grade 3 is the smallest. Nuristan is classified as grade 3. The grade affects the size of the governor's office, as well as the position grades of the staff. See also Chapter 4, The Fragmentation of Power.

Provincial centre: Parun village is the provincial centre of Nuristan. The distance from Kabul to Parun by air is approximately 190 kilometres. By car and four-wheel-drive jeep, the trip takes two full days when the weather conditions are favourable. From October/November to March/April, the trip may take four full days or more (partly by foot or donkey). By helicopter, the travel time is one hour.

The logistics within the province are extremely difficult. It takes many hours/days to send messengers from Parun to the seven district centres. During the winter months, it is not possible at all to reach some of the district centres.

UNOPS opened a small office in Parun in October 2005. During the 2005 elections, a radio communication system between Kabul and Parun was established. UNOPS has constructed a building in Parun for the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD).

Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT): A Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) is a small, joint civil-military organisation with a mission to promote good governance, improved security and reconstruction. In January 2006, there were 23 PRTs in Afghanistan; 12 were directed by the United States, 1 by Canada, 1 by New Zealand; and 9 were directed by the NATO-led ISAF.

The Americans have plans to start a separate PRT in Nuristan in 2006. At present, the PRTs in Laghman, Nangarhar and Kunar are active in Nuristan. See Chapter 7, Provincial Reconstruction Teams.

Power holders: See Chapter 4, The Fragmentation of Power.

Radio/TV broadcasts: Nowadays, many families have a radio. Reportedly, there is one hour of broadcasting (covering only limited parts of Nuristan) a day from Kabul in a Nuristani language. There are no health or education broadcasts. People also listen to broadcasts from Pakistan, BBC, Radio Liberty and some other radio stations on the AM band. A few households have satellite TV, CD and DVD, but this is extremely rare.

Refugees and IDPs: UNHCR reports that there were 4,827 Nuristani refugees in Pakistan in February-March 2005, according to Pakistani authorities. Well-informed Nuristanis interviewed for this survey find this figure grossly exaggerated. There were 33 Nuristani refugees in Iran in January 2005, according to UNHCR.

The largest Nuristani communities outside Asia are found in the United States and Denmark. In January 2006, there were four Nuristani refugee families, with a total of some twenty persons, in Sweden.

According to UNHCR, there were no IDPs in Nuristan nor any Nuristani IDPs in other provinces in 2005. In 2003, there were some 200 families (1,000 individuals/IDPs) living in the Nangarhar IDP location, and another 150 families (750 individuals) were displaced in Waigal, Nuristan. In addition, more than 500 Kushtuz families from Kamdesh were displaced, mainly in Barg-e-Matal. See also Clan feuds, above.

Religion: The Nuristanis are Sunni Muslims. During the 1980s, the Salafi/Wahhabi interpretation of Islam gained strength in parts of Nuristan, mainly in Wama and Barg-e-Matal. It was financed by Arabs, primarily Saudis. Many Nuristani boys and young men were sent to madrasas in Pakistan to study Salafi/Wahhabi Islam and become mawlawis. In addition, some 15 Nuristanis were sent to Saudi-Arabia to study religion for longer periods.

The animistic and polytheistic religion practised before Islamisation is described in "The Kafirs of the Hindu Kush" by George Robertson (1896).

Karl Jettmar (1986) and Richard Strand (2002) describe the Kafir religion as a form of ancient Hinduism, infused with accretions developed locally. *Imro* was universally revered as the Creator. He was accompanied by human-like deities who could be influenced through sacrifice, prayer, and dance. "Supplicants communicated with the deities through shamans, who would go into a trance after the area was purified with juniper smoke to invite the deities' presence."

Roads: Most travel inside Nuristan is still by foot and measured in terms of days and hours rather than miles or kilometres. During the war, a new infrastructure of roads, hotels and bazaars developed to secure supply routes for the resistance movement. Some roads and bridges have been constructed and/or repaired by UNOPS/ USAID, NGOs and the Kunar and Laghman PRTs. See also Chapter 7, The Provincial Reconstruction Teams.

Rule of law: The rule of law has never been strong in Nuristan, but after 1978 it has been displaced almost completely by the "rule of the gun." The Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHCR) has dealt with several cases involving domestic violence, forced taxation and occupation of property in Nuristan (Personal communication from Mr Nader Nadery, Commissioner, AIHCR, October 2005). See also Chapter 4, The Fragmentation of Power.

Security for NGOs: In January 2006, the Afghanistan Non-Governmental Organisation Security Office (ANSO) wrote: "Extreme caution should be exercised in this province... There is little accurate information about ongoing insurgent activities in Nuristan available, as there are almost no international NGOs present there..." and "Credible reports suggest that Taliban/Al Qaeda networks are orchestrating and planning to increase insurgent activities in Eastern Region." Nuristan is classified as a "high risk area" (highest classification) by ANSO. For The World Bank and the United Nations, Nuristan is a "No Go Area."

Nuristanis, in Kabul and Stockholm, interviewed for this survey claim that the security problems for NGO staff are grossly exaggerated. See Chapter 5, The Security Situation for NGOs.

Telecommunications: Through the Microwave Project, funded by the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF), Nuristan is provided immediate voice and data connectivity with national and international broadcasting traffic. ARTF is jointly managed by the Ministry of Finance, the World Bank, the Financial Status Report, the Asian Development Bank and the Islamic Development Bank.

3 THE WOLESI JIRGA AND PROVINCIAL COUNCIL ELECTIONS IN 2005

"The south and east of the country remain the most insecure areas for both women and men. In these areas, women will face particular difficulties to campaign freely and even to vote. This difficulty reflects the strongly chauvinistic, conservative culture of these areas, as well as the growing activity of religious extremist forces, many of them aligned with the Taliban, which oppose any role for women in public life. One election worker said that, 'In Zabul and Nuristan...a lot of women can't be hired [as poll workers] or vote. There are very few women candidates in those provinces. That is a concern. In such provinces, in such an environment it is very clear, women will not be allowed to vote.'
...Conducting civic education campaigns among rural women is particularly difficult given restrictions on their freedom of movement, long travel distances to awareness programs, and opposition by some women's families.
...In the east and north of the country, forces of local militias and armed factions seek to assert their control over regional candidates and, ultimately, the national parliament and Provincial Councils. These forces use their arms for political power, and often, control over local crime, smuggling, and Afghanistan's surging poppy production to intimidate their political opposition. In the northeast, not only social conservatism, but also physical terrain and distance present obstacles. Candidates often have to walk for days to reach election centers, a more significant barrier for women compared to men."

From Barriers to women's participation in the September 2005 elections, Human Rights Watch (HRW), August 2005

"There have also been a number of acts of intimidation aimed at forcing candidates to withdraw. In Nuristan province, an influential male Wolesi Jirga candidate has allegedly offered a large amount of money to a female candidate from the same constituency to withdraw her candidacy. When she refused, he allegedly threatened to kidnap or murder her and her children. He also threatened that if she stepped into the district, he would order her assassination. To avoid reprisal, the female candidate has requested that her name be kept confidential. The case has been reported to the EEC [Electoral Complaints Commission]."

From Joint Verification of Political Rights, Wolesi Jirga and Provincial Council Elections, AIHCR–UNAMA Second Report, 4 June–16 August 2005

"In a country were the majority of the population are illiterate, have little experience or knowledge of how to vote, and where the ballot was one of the most complicated ever used in an election, it was not surprising that some voters were observed getting confused and simply not marking their ballots or marking them incorrectly. During the counting process many unmarked ballots were seen, as well as ballots marked several times, and one ballot in which all the boxes of female candidates had been marked. It was generally assumed that there would be more blank and invalid votes in provinces that were primarily rural, with higher levels of illiteracy and less exposure to voter education efforts. Very low levels of blank and invalid votes in these more remote and insecure provinces could indicate that a few well informed voters filled out many ballots and stuffed ballot boxes, and that blank ballots were marked during the counting process.

There was a surprisingly high variance in the number of blank and invalid votes between the provinces and regions. **It was particularly surprising and suspicious to see some of the lowest levels of invalid and blank ballots in some of the most rural, inaccessible and insecure provinces of the country. The lowest percentages of invalid and blank votes were in Nuristan (0.5%)** (emphasis added), Paktika (0.7%), Paktia (1.6%) and Khost (2.8%). In provinces like Kabul and Herat, with the highest literacy levels and probably the greatest exposure to voter education, the respective percentages were 4.8 and 8.4 per cent."

From A House Divided? – Analysing the 2005 Afghan elections by Andrew Wilder, AREU, December 2005

The Wolesi Jirga Election in 2005. There were 124,583 registered voters in Nuristan for the Wolesi Jirga (Lower House of the National Assembly, total 249 seats). For comparison, the official population figure for Nuristan was 125,700 persons in 2005. (CSO, 2005; see also Chapter 2, Basic Facts and Summary, above) The total number of seats for Nuristan were two, one of which was reserved for a woman. 99.5 per cent of the ballots were considered valid. Cf. Andrew Wilder's comments on the low percentage of invalid and blank votes in Nuristan, in the box above. 53 per cent of the voters were women, 47 per cent were men (Joint Electoral Management Body, JEMB, 2005). The elected candidates were Mr Haji Dad Mohammad Khan and Ms Hawa Alam Nooristani. For a presentation of the elected candidates, see Chapter 4, The Fragmentation of Power.

The Provincial Council Election in 2005. There were 124,583 registered voters in Nuristan for the Provincial Council Election. The total number of seats for Nuristan were nine, three of which were reserved for women. 99.6 per cent of the ballots were considered valid. Cf. Andrew Wilder's comments on the low percentage of invalid and blank votes in Nuristan, in the box above. The female turnout was 52.8 per cent, and the male turnout was 47.2 per cent. There were 25 male and 18 female candidates (JEMB, 2005). The elected candidates are presented in Chapter 4, The Fragmentation of Power.

*

Where security permitted, the counting centres were to be located within the province. The Nuristani counting centre was located in the Olive Factory in Jalalabad, Nangarhar Province (JEMB, 2005).

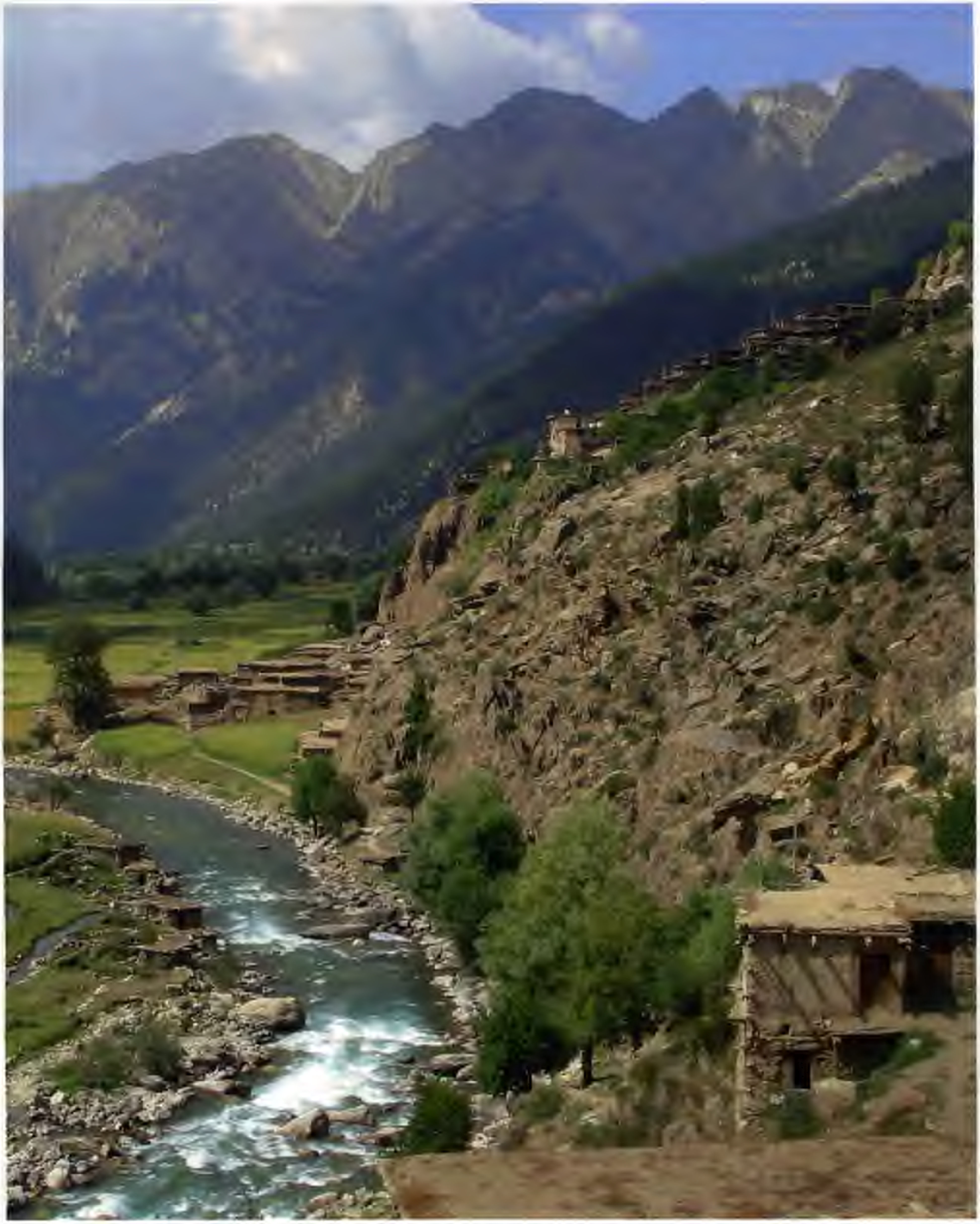
JEMB found it troublesome to recruit adequate numbers of female election workers in Nuristan to staff women's polling sites for the 2005 elections. Security threats, poor education/high illiteracy rates among women and girls, and social restrictions on women's travel made recruitment difficult.

On 17 July 2005, a female District Field Coordinator (DFC) in Kamdesh district was shot and wounded in the leg by suspected Taliban gunmen (aopnews, 18 July 2005). Five days later, a group of some eighty men attacked the village of Kotya and abducted three men, including two election workers. They were later released, reportedly unharmed, but the gunmen were not brought to justice (HRW, August 2005).

An interesting national-level analysis of the elections is provided by Andrew Wilder in "A House Divided? – Analysing the 2005 Afghan Elections" (AREU, December 2005).

*

Presidential Election in 2004. In the presidential election in Nuristan in October 2004, Hamid Karzai got 57.7 per cent of the votes (27,024 votes). Yunus Qanuni got 31 per cent of the votes (14,505 votes) and Ahmad Shah Ahmadzai 6.7 per cent (3,125 votes). In total, there were 46,857 valid votes (UNDP/UNOPS, 28 October 2004). Fifty per cent of the voters were women. Only two provinces had a higher female participation: Daikundi 53 per cent and Faryab 52 per cent. In Helmand, only two per cent of the voters were women (IWPR, 22 Oct. 2004).



PROVINCIAL SURVEY OF NURISTAN

Katarina Larsson, May 2006

SCA
Swedish Committee for Afghanistan

4 THE FRAGMENTATION OF POWER

"Thus kept more or less alone, the present situation in Nuristan is reminiscent of the one that existed there before Islamisation, when the communities, *desh*, were entirely autonomous. Nuristan again can arrange its affairs on the basis of local traditions and decision-making bodies, and can also choose between the Islamist tenets preached by Wahhabi or Panjpiri or mainstream Sunni Hanafi mullahs. Unaffected by the ongoing civil war, the Nuristanis are free to turn their attention to both developmental issues and internal conflicts, readily seizing their arms whenever the situation gets tense. As many new developmental projects are undertaken, more clashes erupt over conflicting uses of land and water, road construction, power stations, water pipe lines, clinics, schools and the like...

Caught in between are the Western donor organisations such as, in particular, the French organisation MADERA and the British NGO Afghanaid. With no powerful government authorities intervening, they depend, like the Nuristani, on the local means of conflict solving, that is with the help of respected local mediators or elders in specially summoned *jirga* meetings...

In spite of the contemporary openness of Nuristan to the outside world, the better knowledge of each other and the greater mobility of its male population, old animosities and prejudices survive. These are partially inspired by the recent Islamist missionary work on the part of different religious schools, which are united only in their efforts to efface all memory of the Kafir past with its liberal and sensuous life style.

The Islamists have succeeded above all in tightening up the separation of the sexes, which could meet quite openly only a few decades ago. Nowadays nearly all Nuristani women veil themselves when encountering unrelated men... Newly constructed houses have a new design that helps to keep the women away from the public eye. Music, singing and dancing is strictly forbidden everywhere with the exception of several villages in Waigal, where some 'liberal attitudes' can still be found. At least hockey and other games are still being played."

From "The Situation in Nuristan" by Professor Max Klimburg, 2001 [before 11 September]

"At one time, killing Muslims was also a way of achieving status; this was later replaced by killing 'Afghans' or by cattle rustling and, in the recent war, by killing Soviets or Communists."

From "The Fragmentation of Afghanistan" by Barnett R. Rubin, 2002

"... Nuristan is one of the major areas of infiltration by insurgents crossing the border from Pakistan...

Because bleak as the situation in Nuristan is, as much do Taliban-linked insurgents and al-Qaeda prosper...

Coalition Forces apparently try to take action against the fighters and are conducting operations in the area but they are 'not very talkative'...

But locals do not suffer only from insurgents. In the absence of any credible government authority, any Kabul-style post-Taliban enlightment still has to take place in Nuristan... life for women in Nuristan, if anything, seems to be getting worse. Religious elders for example forced a local high school to turn girls away and transform into a Madrassa (religious school) serving boys only... Nuristanis seem to have become more orthodox than many an Afghan in other parts of the country. Here, clerics still force people to publicly burn their televisions and CD players. And in the absence of any government authority they can probably do so for some time to come."

From "No Progress in Nuristan" by Daan van der Schriek, March 2005 [see also quotation from van der Schriek in Chapter 5 The Security Situation for NGOs]

> "Wahhabis are powerful in Wama and Barg-e-Matal, but there are no Arabs in Nuristan now. Hezb-e-Islami is very powerful in Kamdesh. After the Jihad times, the power of the religious leaders [in the other parts of Nuristan] is now limited, and decreasing day by day. Some of the Jihadi leaders have left the country because they are in opposition to the Government and the United States Forces [Coalition Forces]. The Government power and influence is getting stronger... The District Governors are getting stronger, as the Central Government is getting stronger. They are proposed by the Governor and appointed by the Ministry of Interior."
> Nuristani interviewee, March 2006

The gradual disintegration of the state and its institutions under the pressures of war, occupation and civil war has been particularly felt in Nuristan because of its geographical isolation and weak infrastructure. An attempt to carve out an independent Islamic state from Nuristan was even made, but could not be sustained.

The process of integrating the province into the national framework of Afghanistan is ongoing but far from completed. The formal structures of government power, at central and provincial levels, have been established, but real, actual power remains fragmented and divided among a great number of different groups and stakeholders.

The pattern of power holding in Nuristan is complex and partly inaccessible to outside fact-finders because of its sensitive nature. This applies to powerful illegal groups such as the logging mafia, the opium traffickers and other actors within the organised crime sector. It also applies to armed opposition groups, terrorists, infiltrators from Pakistan, etc. The implications of military operations in the area, such as "Operation Enduring Freedom," are likely to influence local power relations greatly but are, by necessity, surrounded by military secrecy.

It has not been possible, therefore, within the framework of this survey, to even attempt to cover the question of fragmentation of power in Nuristan in its entity.

In the following text, only information which is available officially and through open interviews will be presented (in alphabetical order). For an in-depth analysis of the situation, a separate study will no doubt be required.

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The Dawlat. The Dawlat-e-Inqilabi-ye-Islami-je-Nuristan (the Islamic Revolutionary State of Nuristan), generally called the Dawlat, was a tiny, "independent" **Wahhabi (Salafi) 'Emirate of God'** in the northern part of the Bashgal Valley under the leadership of Emir Mawlawi Afzal. The Dawlat was founded in 1982. Its Council of Ministers and Government offices received direct financial and technical support from Salafi religious groups in Pakistan, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. Dawlat consulates were established in Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. Many Arabs settled in the Dawlat. Students of Islam were sent to Saudi Arabia for advanced theological studies. Klimburg (2001) claims that the creation of the Dawlat deepened the traditional antagonism inside the Bashgal Valley between the **Kantozi** villages in the north and the **Kam** villages in the south, dominated by the large village of Kamdesh where the influence of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's Hezb-e-Islami was strong.

The Dawlat collapsed during the second half of the 1990s. Afzal was attacked and heavily injured, losing one eye, and left for Pakistan, where he lived under the protection of the Lashkar-e-Taiba. (Schriek, 2005) According to one Nuristani interviewee, Afzal has recently returned to his home village Nik Mok where he lives under house arrest. Wahhabis are still

strong in Barg-e-Matal and parts of Wama. Nuristanis interviewed for this survey are convinced that the Arabs now have left Nuristan, except for one or two Egyptians married to Nuristani women.

Hezb-e-Islami. Hezb-e-Islami remains strong in Kamdesh. A Hezb-e-Islami sympathiser interviewed for this survey claimed that **Mawlawi Sadique** [Commander under Gulbuddin Hekmatyar] in Barg-e-Matal, "a well-educated man and a good politician" was not a candidate in the elections, because he is being chased by the Coalition Forces (CF). Likewise, **Mawlawi Faqirullah**, also a former Commander of Hezb-e-Islami, and **Haji Ghafour** from Kantiwa are hiding. Haji Ghafour "disappeared" after an attack by the CF, but he is still alive. He is not educated, but most intelligent and smart, according to the interviewee. Ghafour was a mujahedeen leader in Nuristan and Kunar for six-seven years, and he was against the Taliban. "People still like them. If there had been a free election without guns, these three would have been elected. There is only one problem – they are all over sixty years old." Others describe Ghafour as "the number one warlord in Nuristan" (Schriek, 2005).

See also Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's statement in Chapter 5, The Security Situation for NGOs, regarding driving the occupation forces out of Afghanistan, the establishment of an Islamic system and Christians spreading moral corruption.

Jamiat-e-Islami. Some of the most well-known Jamiat leaders in Nuristan are Mawlawi Rabbani from Waigal, Haji Mohammad Rahim from Kantiwa and Haji Din Mohammad from Kolatan.

The Panjpiri*. Already in the 1960s, the Panjpiri mullahs started to "preach throughout Nuristan the 'true Islam' according to orthodox tenets, related to those of the Indian Deobandi school which was also to provide the basis of the Taliban movement. Their message was clear and simple: acknowledgement of nothing but what is written in the Quran or established by Hadith, strict opposition to every kind of deviation in folklore or otherwise, in particular against the cult of saints, dance and music and all non-Islamic feasts, and for an absolute gender-based division of the society. In essence all recreational activities were condemned as distracting from or even obtrusive to the essential duty of worshipping Allah… Islamist proselytising activities must be seen against the background of a culture that once was extremely lively and extroverted" (Klimburg, 2001).

Provincial Council Delegates. In the Provincial Council Elections in 2005 (see also Chapter 3), the following nine persons were elected according to the Joint Electoral Management Body (JEMB):

	District	Occupation before election
Mawlawi Mohammad Gul	Wama	Judge in Parun
Mawlawi Taj Mohammad	DoAb	No employment
Mr Noorullah	Parun	Headmaster, Kantiwa High School
Mr Al-Haj Shair Mohammad Nooristani	Mandol	No employment
Mr Ahmadshah Wakilzada	Nangarage	No employment
Mr Munawar Nizami	Parun	Lawyer
Ms Bibi Narges	Kamdesh	No employment
Ms Gulalai	Kamdesh	No employment
Ms Bibi Zarmina Atiqan	Waigal	Nurse

* Panjpir is a village close to Mardan in Pakistan's North-West Frontier Province. The Panjpiris were educated in the madrasa in Panjpir.

Reportedly, some of the nine elected persons are secretly supporters of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. Most of the elected candidates are from the central parts of Nuristan.

After the election, Mr Al-Haj Shair Mohammad Nooristani and Mr Noorullah were selected to be First and Second Senator respectively, in the Senate (Upper House) of the National Assembly in Kabul. They were replaced in the provincial Council by two persons:

Mr Haqdad Khan	Waigal	No employment
Mr Rahmatullah Rashidi	Barg-e-Matal	No employment

In council meetings, Pashtu is spoken since it is the only language the Nuristani Councillors have in common. The roles, mandates and budgetary powers of the elected Provincial Councils in Afghanistan have not yet been defined. Some councillors complain that they have no power at all (IWPR, 19 March 2006).

Provincial administration. Governor (Wali) Mohammad Tamim Nuristani, from Kantiwa in central Nuristan, was appointed Governor in early 2005 by the Government in Kabul. His cousin, Haji Halim Nuristani, also from Kantiwa, is Deputy Governor.

The province is divided into seven districts and a provincial centre, Parun. The District Governors are appointed by the Ministry of Interior upon recommendation by the Governor. According to JEMB (April 2006), the names of the District Governors are as follows:

Mr Deen Mohammad	Waigal (also called Want) District
Mr Ghulam Sakhi	Wama District
Mr Gul Mohammad	Kamdesh District
Mr Mohammad Ali	Barg-e-Matal District
Mr Nawroz	Nangarage (also called Noor Gram) District
Mr Mohammad Osman	DoAb District
Mr Mohammad Azam	Mandol District

The provincial administration in Nuristan is not yet well developed, and the budget is limited. The logistics problems are enormous.

Traditional local councils. "Men of Influence in Nuristan: A Study of Social Control and Dispute Settlement in Waigal Valley, Afghanistan" is an anthropological study by Schuyler Jones (1973). Some of the main findings in the study regarding village governance were:

- The village leaders, normally elders and never women, have influence rather than authority.
- An influential elder is primarily one who has gained a reputation for being honest and dealing with situations in a forthright and objective manner. He must also be clever in debate and skilled in formulating his arguments. He should be a member of an 'important' lineage, i.e. one with many male members. He must be objective and have a reputation for 'seeing the problem, not the people.'
- When there is a dispute involving the whole village then the entire village is expected to provide both moral and material support.

Reportedly, councils of elders are still very influential and powerful in many areas.

Wolesi Jirga representatives. The 2005 election for the Wolesi Jirga (Lower House of the National Assembly, total 249 seats) are described in Chapter 3. The two elected candidates for Nuristan were:

Mr Haji Dad Mohammad Khan. He left the military to be able to run for the election. He is a former Jamiat Commander from Nangarage District; illiterate; connected to Qanuni. Some remarks from interviewees for this survey: "He is not a good man for Nuristan, totally uneducated. Got the vote from the Laghman area [the part of Nuristan which earlier belonged to Laghman], backed by Jamiat." – "Very honest, the people like him. He is illiterate, but smart. He was the head of a militia during the fight against the Russians." – "It's a shame! In one village in Mandol 600 votes went to him, but no one knew him! He is connected to people in Kabul. He belongs to Jamiat. He cannot speak Dari and Pashtu." According to other sources, he speaks Pashtu, but not Dari.

Ms Hawa Alam Nooristani. She was earlier a lower-level official in the Ministry of Women's Affairs in Kabul and a Pashtu-language anchorwoman on the state-run Afghan Television and Radio in Kabul. 45 years old. Resident in Kabul. Cannot speak any Nuristani languages. Not a Nuristani herself, but married to Mr Alam Nuristani, adviser to Governor Tamim Nuristani. During the election campaign, she reported daily threats from Islamic militants based across the border in Pakistan. While campaigning in September 2005, she was shot three times in the leg and once in the ear. In an interview she said: "I think my security problems are not caused by the people of Nuristan. They are caused by the enemies of the Afghan government, those who oppose the development of Afghanistan and the new democratic process." Described by one influential Nuristani as "good, well-educated, a high profile, knows the President." Another interviewee said: "Not very popular with the [Nuristani] people."

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HE Dr Yusuf Nuristani, First Deputy Minister of Defence, and Mr Khodaidad, SCA staff member, October 2005. Dr Nuristani is the most prominent Nuristani in the Afghan Government. Photo: Katarina Larsson

5 THE SECURITY SITUATION FOR NGOs

No reconstruction without security and no security without reconstruction
"There is widespread agreement among Afghans and international observers that there can be no reconstruction without security, and there can be no security without reconstruction. In Afghanistan, as in other post-conflict situations, construction crews cannot build roads, clinics, or schools if they face threatening forces; armed groups will not give up the way of the gun unless they can make a living and protect their families and livelihood without it."
Sam Zia-Zarifi, Human Rights Watch World Report, 2004

On 30 October 2003, eight civilians were killed in a US-led Coalition Forces air raid in the Waigal Valley, but the US military has denied any knowledge of the incident. On 7 November 2003, the United States Forces launched the Operation Mountain Resolve to "destroy and disrupt anti-coalition forces and deny sanctuary to them." Troops from the 10th Mountain Division, Special Operations Forces and Air Forces were participating (news24.com, 10 Nov. 2003).

"Osama bin Laden is also still at large. Having failed to catch or kill him, the Americans now say that keeping him isolated and on the run is almost as useful. Most Kabul insiders assume that he is alive but have divergent views as to his whereabouts. Some say he is living in a suburb of Karachi, in Pakistan. The latest speculation puts him in north-eastern Afghanistan, perhaps in the eastern districts of Nuristan province.

The American-led coalition recently sent 1,000 troops into Nuristan in an operation called 'Mountain Resolve', targeting supporters of Gulbuddin Hikmatyar, a renegade warlord allied to the al-Qaeda leader. The coalition says the mission is to promote "freedom of movement and commerce" in the region, but Nuristani elders claim that elected representatives from western Nuristan were prevented from travelling to this week's constitutional *loya jirga* in Kabul because of the military activity. These delegates were already reluctant to pass through the lands of their sworn enemies to the south, whom they accused of feeding the Americans faulty intelligence. That may explain what appeared to be an American air strike on the house of a Kabul loyalist in Nuristan on October 31st, which killed eight people, including children asleep in bed.

Nuristanis are a defiant bunch. They were the first Afghans to rise up against the Soviet occupation. Much of the province leans towards radical Islam, and some of its mullahs were educated at Saudi-influenced religious schools in Pakistan. But that does not automatically mean that they support Mr bin Laden. And even if Mr Hikmatyar's thugs hid him, he would have a hard time moving around. 'He does not know our ways, our languages. We would spot him immediately,' says one elder."
From The Economist, 11 December 2003

Close relatives to the eight victims of the US-led Coalition Forces air raid in the Waigal Valley in 2003 were interviewed for this survey in October 2005. The family never got an excuse from the Coalition Forces, and they were never offered any compensation for lost lives and destroyed property.

In the Norwegian Afghanistan Committee (NAC) Annual Report for 2003, it is stated that the Coalition Forces carried out large-scale operations in Nuristan during 2003. "The ongoing war on terrorism ... has resulted in a complete absence of expatriate aid workers in the area as all embassies and international organisations have judged the region as a non-go area for internationals. Moreover, also national staff has periodically been in hibernation when the situation has been especially tense. While constructing the Aranz clinic in Nuristan some NAC staff had to hide behind the uncompleted building in order to protect themselves from misplaced bullets."

In May 2004, two British consultants working for the Global Risk Strategies (a London-based security company) and their Afghan interpreter were killed in Mandol. Reportedly, they were there to evaluate the feasibility of establishing voter registration sites (irinnews.org, 6 May 2004). See comments below.

In September 2004, the Afghan Aid office, financed by EU/DFID, in eastern Nuristan (Barg-e-Matal and Kamdesh) was looted. The local staff was beaten. Two vehicles as well as all electronic and communications equipment were stolen (IRIN, 20 Sept. 2004). Afghan Aid then left Nuristan, but came back in May 2005 as Facilitating Partner in the National Solidarity Programme (NSP).

On 14 September 2005, the chief editor of the weekly Bamyan, a cameraman and an official from the Ministry of Women's Affairs were kidnapped in Waigal when they were preparing a documentary. The group was travelling with Ms Hawa Alam Nuristani, a candidate in the Wolesi Jirga election. The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) protested: "It is particularly worrying that the kidnapping appears to be politically motivated" (IFJ, 21 Sept. 2005). The three managed to escape six days later when their captors were sleeping. The abductors did not use violence, but complained about the "apathy of the provincial government" (Pajhwok Afghan News, 21 Sept. 2005).

On 6 October 2005, two Afghan Aid employees, their driver and a policeman were kidnapped in the Bashgal area of Kamdesh where they were inspecting work done by the National Solidarity Programme (NSP). After two days, the Afghan Aid employees were released on condition that they would not work for any NGO. The article ends somewhat cryptically: "Following intervention by a mediator, he [Mohammad Omar] said without elaborating, they had reached an agreement with the kidnappers on working in Nuristan" (Pajhwok Afghan News, 8 Oct. 2005).

On 29 November 2005, Pajhwok Afghan News reported that gunmen had robbed the Afghan Aid Finance Manager of workers' salaries amounting to one million Afs. The Finance Manager was transferring the cash from Jalalabad when he was stopped by robbers in Kordesh in Kamdesh District, and deprived of the money. According to the Pajhwok Afghan News, Mr Ghulamullah Nuristani, the Deputy Provincial Police Chief, suspected that "Afghan Aid staffers might have been involved in the incident, because it seemed the robbers knew the route and time of the Finance Manager."

> "It is tempting to speculate that these incidents point to a well-organised, successful plan to stop reconstruction efforts and drive out all foreigners from Nuristan. Notwithstanding the plausibility of this hypothesis, there is very little evidence on the ground to back it up. The Global Risk employees were most likely murdered by their own Nuristani escort for their weapons and communications gear worth thousands of dollars. As in the rest of Afghanistan, crime is rife in Nuristan – and criminal incidents are often claimed by or blamed on insurgents. The reaction of the expatriate community to the murders was the same as if they were the result of a premeditated attack by insurgents: immediate evacuation of the area. This decision effectively abandoned the whole area to warlords, terrorists and criminals, who feel free to travel and operate in Nuristan.
>
> Indeed perennial local conflicts are favoured by all three elements which thrive on widespread lawlessness. Although there are tribal and village structures in Nuristan, regional institutions are woefully lacking. Therefore there is nothing to stop villages from fighting over water and land rights, which is all too often the norm in Nuristan. In one area near the villages of Barg-e-Matal and Kamdesh in the east, nothing less than tribal war is taking place (including rocket attacks and the mining of opponents' territory).

The violence helps to keep foreigners and state officials away, which is why local insurgents and Lashkar-e-Toiba, which has a foothold in the area, have a vested interest in stimulating local rivalries.

The insurgents in Nuristan have little to do with the Taliban. Active in Nuristan and the neighbouring province of Kunar are veteran warlord Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's Hezb-e-Islami and an indigenous Nuristani group under the authority of Maulvi Afzal."

From Nuristan: Insurgent Hideout in Afghanistan by Daan van der Schriek, May 2005

On 8 January 2006, the Hezb-e-Islami leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar commemorated the annual pilgrimage by announcing that it is "incumbent on every Afghan" to engage in jihad until all occupation forces are driven out of Afghanistan and "an Islamic system is established ... in accordance with the people's wishes." He claimed that the foreign aid provided to NGOs in Afghanistan is aimed at "converting Afghans to Christianity and spreading moral corruption" (aopnews.com 10 January 2006).

On the same occasion, the Taliban leader Mulla Muhammad Omar urged his men to continue fighting until the US-led Coalition Forces have been evicted from Afghanistan, and refrain from taking emotional and individual decisions on the battlefront. He rejected President Karzai's latest offer of talks for reconciliation as impossible as long as the US-led troops remain in Afghanistan (aopnews.com 10 January).

Nuristan Province

"Extreme caution should be exercised in this province

The security situation in the province has been calm with no incident reported during the reporting period.

There is little accurate information about ongoing insurgent activities in Nuristan available, as there are almost no international NGOs present there. All movements should be conducted only during the day and only on a case-to-case basis. NGOs are advised to adopt a low profile and to keep in constant radio contact.

Joining Reconciliation Program

7th January 2006, Kamdesh district. It was reported by a reliable source that two Hezbi Islami Gulbudin Hekmatyar (HIG) Commanders, by the name of Qasi Joma Khan and Mawlavi Noor Ahmad surrendered to the National Reconciliation Commission in Kamdesh District, Nuristan Province."

ANSO Weekly Report, 5 –11 January 2006

Nuristan is classified as a "high risk area" (the highest classification) by ANSO (Afghanistan Non-Governmental Organisation Safety Office). For The World Bank and the United Nations, Nuristan is a "No Go Area."

According to the ANSO Weekly Report for 19-25 January 2006, "credible" information suggests that Taliban/Al Qaeda networks are orchestrating and planning to increase insurgent activities in the Eastern Region. During the week, ANSO received information indicating that a group of AGEs [Anti Government Elements]/insurgents had entered Waigal and Kamdesh districts on 20 January 2006 "to conduct operations in the area."

'Propaganda' about the security situation in Nuristan?

"In the villages of Nuristan, they denounce the 'propaganda' coming from the authorities in Kabul and what they say is a destabilisation campaign orchestrated by the neighbouring provinces of Kunar and Laghman. 'They don't want us to be a strong province or for us to profit from our natural resources,' complains Mohammad Ibrahim, police chief of the central district of Want.

Officials in the province say its supposed security problems are a myth, and attacks are still rare in Nuristan...The only exception is Kamdesh district, which shares the instability of many regions along the border with Pakistan. Nuristan's police chief, Abdul Baqi Nuristani, admits there are problems in Kamdesh: 'But there are no problems with the other five [*sic*] districts of the province,' he says.

Nuristan has also been considered a breeding ground for the radical Islam of former Afghan Prime Minister Gulbuddin Hekmatyar... Hekmatyar is wanted by the U.S. for his attempts to destabilise President Hamid Karzai's government and for alleged human rights violations. But these days he has no influence because the villages want peace, say several local district chiefs.

There has been some violence, though. In May 2004, two Britons and an Afghan working on preparations for the country's presidential elections last year were killed in Mandol district, in the west of the province. 'But they created the problems themselves, particularly by refusing to travel with the authorities,' says the provincial police chief.

Since then, aid agencies have not employed full-time foreigners in the area, mainly for security reasons. 'Non-governmental organisations have become a potential target for those who wish to destabilise the country,' says a Western worker with one of the few agencies still working with local staff in Nuristan. The worker did not want to be identified for security reasons.

ANSO [cf. above] continues to recommend 'extreme caution' to NGOs in the region, while admitting that it lacks information on the current situation on the ground.

...Another brake on development are rivalries between local villages. The completion of the road between Want district and nearby Waigal, which would finally allow the locals to transport goods by means other than by foot or on the back of a donkey, is blocked by a row over water supply."

AFP, The Daily Star, 2 September 2005

Nuristanis, in Kabul and Stockholm, interviewed for this survey claim that the security problems for NGOs in Nuristan are grossly exaggerated by the central government and media.

In November 2005, the Coalition Forces announced that they and the Afghan National Army (ANA) will be present in Nuristan throughout the winter to prevent "anti-government militants to conduct activities" (People's Daily Online, 21 Nov. 2005).

6 THE OPIUM ECONOMY

A Harvest of Treachery

"Narcotics trafficking isn't merely big, it's more than half the economy... 52 percent of the country's entire GDP. And many of the underground industry's most important figures are said to be senior government officials in Kabul and the provinces… [reportedly] Afghan government officials are involved in at least 70 percent of the traffic…

Afghanistan's main problems are all linked to drug trafficking: rampant corruption, repressive militia groups, human-rights abuses and bad governance…

Drugs and insecurity feed each other. Poppy cultivation is spreading to remote and inaccessible areas, and with it insecurity. "

From Newsweek, 9 January 2006

Counter-Narcotics – A Cross-Cutting Priority

"Meeting the threat that the narcotics industry poses to national, regional and international security as well as the development and governance of the country and the well-being of Afghans will be a priority for the Government and the international community. The aim will be to achieve a sustained and significant reduction in the production and trafficking of narcotics with a view to complete elimination. Essential elements include improved interdiction, law enforcement and judicial capacity building; enhanced cooperation among Afghanistan, neighbouring countries and the international community on disrupting the drugs trade; wider provision of economic alternatives for farmers and labourers in the context of comprehensive rural development; and building national and provincial counter-narcotics institutions. It will also be crucial to enforce a zero-tolerance policy towards official corruption; to pursue eradication as appropriate; to reinforce the message that producing or trading opiates is both immoral and a violation of Islamic law; and to reduce the demand for the illicit use of opiates."

From the Afghanistan Compact, London, 31 January-1 February 2006

Statement by UNODC Executive Director

"Afghanistan needs adequate criminal justice, honest governance, robust law enforcement and effective border management. But above all, Afghanistan needs development… eradication needs to be complemented by measures to promote development and governance. I noted the broad consensus that we need to reduce poverty as a way of reducing illicit crops in the long term."

Mr Antonio Maria Costa, Executive Director of UNODC,
17 March 2006

In November 2005, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) published a report titled the **Afghanistan Opium Survey 2005**. Here are some of the findings:

- In 2004, Afghanistan provided 86 per cent of the global illicit opium supply.
- Illicit opiates of Afghan origin are consumed by an estimated 10-11 million abusers (or two thirds of all opiate consumers).
- It is estimated that more than half a million people are involved in the trade of illicit Afghan opiates.
- The main beneficiaries from opium production in Afghanistan are the traffickers. About 79 per cent of the total income from Afghanistan's opium economy was reaped by traffickers (including laboratory owners) and 21 per cent by farmers.

PREFACE

The Swedish Committee for Afghanistan (SCA) has been contracted by the Ministry of Public Health and EU to implement the Basic Package of Health Service (BPHS) in Nuristan during 2005. This is the third province in which SCA involves itself to deliver service and build competency within the framework of BPHS. In 2003, SCA pioneered the BPHS in Kunduz, followed by Wardak in 2004. SCA is concentrating its assistance and cooperation in the field of health geographically and is gradually handing over its clinics, spread over many provinces to other actors.

Nuristan, unlike both Wardak and Kunduz, is one of the provinces where SCA did not have much activity before. Therefore, experience and knowledge were not as solid as in many other regions of Afghanistan, and the need of information was comparatively larger for Nuristan than for Wardak and Kunduz.

SCA asked Katarina Larsson, who successfully produced surveys on Kunduz and Wardak, to also write a similar report on Nuristan. I am pleased to see the requested product completed and ready for dissemination. Facts have been scrutinized and cross-checked to the extent possible. However, the report is the responsibility of the author and does not necessarily reflect views and opinions of SCA.

I would like to express my sincere thanks to Katarina Larsson for her work. Her devotion, curiosity and conscientiousness have resulted in an interesting review of a province that we know too little about. This review will help filling the gap of knowledge. The reading offers comprehensive and up-dated information on aspects relevant to SCA's efforts at humanitarian actions and development in Nuristan and beyond.

Stockholm May 2006

Bengt Kristiansson
Secretary General of SCA

- Villages producing opium poppy had, on average, opium addiction rates seven times higher than the opium addiction rates in villages which did not produce opium poppy.
- In 2004, the area under cultivation increased by two thirds, reaching a record level of 131,000 hectares.
- In 2005, the area under cultivation decreased by 21 per cent. Due to favourable weather conditions, however, the average opium yield per hectare increased by 22 per cent. This meant that the harvest decrease in 2005 was only marginal.
- The national decline in cultivation is attributed to several factors according to interviews with farmers: fear of eradication (35%), fear of imprisonment (20%), forbidden by Islam (16%), poppy ban (15%), and lower prices and less demand (10%). Shura decision rated 0%.
- **In Nuristan, contrary to the national trend, the area under poppy cultivation increased by more than 100 per cent, from 764 hectares in 2004 to 1,554 hectares in 2005, a larger area than ever before.**
- **The major poppy-growing district in Nuristan was Mandol, followed by Barg-e-Matal.**
- In the neighbouring provinces, however, the cultivation decreased sharply in 2005, mainly due to eradication programmes: in Nangarhar by 96 per cent to 1,093 hectares, in Laghman by 90 per cent to 274 hectares, and in Kunar by 76 per cent to 1,059 hectares.

In February 2006, UNODC published the Afghanistan **Opium Rapid Assessment Survey (ORAS) 2006**. Some of the findings were as follows:

- There was an increasing trend in opium poppy cultivation in 13 provinces, a decreasing trend in 3 provinces and no change in 16 provinces as compared to the results of the Afghanistan Opium Survey 2005.
- The three provinces with an **expected decreasing trend were Nuristan** (following a sharp increase of more than 100% in 2005), Sar-e-Pul and Samangan.
- Opium poppy grows more successfully in areas at elevations below 1,500m than in those at higher elevations. **Cultivation at elevations above 2,500m is very limited due to unfavourable weather conditions**.
- Nationally, opium farmers earn up to 10 times more per hectare cultivated than cereal farmers. The main reasons for opium poppy cultivation according to interviews with farmers were: poverty alleviation (provision of basic food and shelter) 37.2%, high sale price of opium 29.4%, and no aid received from government or other sources 20.2%.
- Nationally, groups such as drug smugglers are encouraging villagers to grow opium poppy. They give villagers guarantees for the protection of land on which opium poppy is cultivated, and in some areas use threats and intimidation to force those farmers who have not yet cultivated opium poppy to do so.
- The average farm-gate price of dry opium in Afghanistan was USD144 per kilo (at the time of the survey in December 2005). In Nangarhar, where anti-drug law enforcement is strong, the price per kilo was USD207. In Nuristan it was USD 190.

- According to UNODC, there are 170 villages in Nuristan. ORAS collected information in eight of those villages.

*

According to the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (Wilder, 2005), the newly elected National Assembly with 249 seats includes **17 known drug traffickers** (and 40 commanders still associated with armed groups, 24 members who belong to criminal gangs and 19 members who face serious allegations of war crimes and human rights violation).

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On 12 January 2005, the Afghan News Network reported that the police department in eastern Nuristan had released 35 poppy farmers who had been imprisoned for one month for failing to destroy their poppy fields.

On 1 August 2005, the Pajhwok Afghan News reported that the UNAMA office in Noor Gram (Nangarage) district had been hit by three rockets. Locals said similar attacks had been made from the hills in the past when security forces launched a poppy eradication campaign in the area. The Noor Gram administrator accused Taliban and Al-Qaeda fighters for the attack.

Poppy cultivation in Nuristan is neither traditional nor intensive. Observers seem to agree that Nuristan is too marginal and much of it located at too high altitudes ever to become a big opium producer, but even so it could become dependent upon poppy cultivation and be shaped by it, like the country as a whole.

7 PROVINCIAL RECONSTRUCTION TEAMS (PRT)

A Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) is a small, joint civil-military organisation with a mission to promote good governance, improved security and reconstruction. In January 2006, there were 23 PRTs in Afghanistan; 12 were directed by the United States, one by Canada, one by New Zealand; and nine were directed by the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). The United States Department of State (Fact Sheet dated 31 January 2006) presents the mandate of the US-directed PRTs in the following way:

- They engage key government, military, tribal, village, and religious leaders in the provinces, while monitoring and reporting on important political, military and reconstruction developments.
- They work with Afghan authorities to provide security, including support for key events such as elections, and the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of militia forces.
- They assist in the deployment and mentoring of Afghan national army and police units assigned to the provinces.
- In partnership with the Afghan Government, the UN, other donors and NGOs, PRTs provide needed development and humanitarian assistance.
- In some cases, the PRTs directly support assistance projects which address local needs and build Afghan capacity.

PRT in Nuristan. There are plans to start a US-led PRT in Parun, the Provincial Centre of Nuristan, as soon as the roads leading there are completed. In the interim, a mini PRT will be operating out of the Mehtarlam (Laghman) US-led PRT. The mini PRT will be set up as soon as staff and equipment have arrived.

PRT in Laghman. In early March 2006, the TF76 Surgeon Cell of the Laghman PRT, accompanied by US Marines, provided **"medical and veterinary assistance packages"** out of the medical clinics in DoAb and Nangarage already in place. They reported that the DoAb clinic was open on an irregular basis due to shortage of medical staff. The Nangarage clinic was open daily.

The Laghman PRT has conducted **medical surveys** in DoAb and Nangarage. (Copies have been received for this provincial survey. See Chapter, 9 Health.)





The Titan Road being constructed in western Nuristan, December 2005. Photos: US PRT

The Laghman PRT has built the **Titan Bridge** which was inaugurated on 20 March 2006. Both the **Titan Road** and the **Parun to Wama Road** are "at 75% completion" and will be completed within a couple of months. "As for the Spring offensive we got approval for several roads in Nuristan which will provide roads from Titan Road to Parun. Also a Municipal Building will be built in Parun. They also got approval for heavy equipment so that the city could build their own roads. We also received approval for an ambulance and three Micro Hydros in DoAb."

A representative from the Laghman PRT participates in the monthly **Nuristan Provincial Coordinating Board (PCB) meetings** in Jalalabad. These meetings are reported to be very informative. Other participants are the Directors of NGOs and agencies working in Nuristan. (The above information on the PRT in Laghman is based on personal communication from PRT staff, 27, 28 and 29 March 2006.)

PRT in Nangarhar Province. The US-led PRT in Nangarhar has focussed on building road infrastructure, government buildings and infrastructure in Nangarhar. Their civil work in Nuristan has been extremely limited. "Right now the terrain [in Nuristan] is not supportive of vehicles and people go in either by donkey or helicopter" (Personal communication from Nangarhar PRT staff, 24 March 2006).

PRT in Kunar Province. The goal is to establish a PRT in Nuristan. The Kunar PRT, also led by the US, has road projects from Nangulam to Want, from Naray to Kamdesh, and from Want to Waigal. "We've met with the Director of Women's Issues [Affairs] and with MRRD and given both of them HCA [Help Coordination Association]. We´re aware of the project needs for the area, but can´t commit to anything until we have roads in place and ideally a PRT in the province" (Personal communication from Kunar PRT staff, 24 March 2006).

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It should be kept in mind that the mandate of the American PRTs relate only to the joint civil-military organisation of these units and their development and reconstruction tasks. The mandate does not include the role of the combat forces belonging to the "Operation Enduring Freedom" (OEF) and their military operations against armed opposition groups and terrorists. Those forces are highly mobile, using helicopters, rocket launchers and heavy machine-guns.

The combat forces of the OEF have been criticised for an allegedly heavy-handed approach towards the local population.

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In addition to the roads being built by the American PRTs, **the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), the Ministry of Public Works (MoPW) and the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRDD)** have been cooperating in building and improving the road network in Nuristan. Their office is located in Jalalabad in Nangarhar province. Here follows a complete list, dated December 2005, of their projects in Nuristan since early 2003:

District	Road name	Road length	Status in December 2005
Parun	Pashki to Eshtiwe	12 km	Completed in 2003 (MoPW)
Parun	Wally to Chaman Poshki	13 km	Completed in 2003 (MoPW)
Waigal	Nishagram	10 km	Completed in 2004 (MoPW)
Waigal	Nishagal	7.5 km	Completed in 2005 (MoPW)
Wama	Kordar to Kund	12 km	Ongoing (MoPW)
Waigal	Want to Waigal	15 km	Ongoing (MRRD)
DoAb	Dahani Pair to the end of the Dara road	6 km	Ongoing (MRRD)
Waigal	Four concrete bridges and other road structures along the Want-Waigal road		Ongoing (MRRD)
DoAb	One concrete bridge along Dahani Pair to the end Of the Dara road		Ongoing (MRRD)

Much of this road work has been financed by USAID. For security reasons, USAID/UNOPS will not be involved in road construction in Nuristan in 2006 (Personal communication from Eng. Sogol Akef, USAID/UNOPS, 21 March 2006).



Mountain pass in eastern Nuristan. Photo: Borje Almqvist, 1985

8 THE NATIONAL RISK AND VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENTS (NRVAs)

The 2003 National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment (NRVA) was carried out in 2003 with the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD) as the lead agency, and the World Food Programme (WFP) as the main coordinating partner. The primary objective was to collect information at the community and household level to better understand livelihoods of **rural** settled populations and nomadic pastoralists (Kuchis) throughout the country and to determine the types of risks and vulnerabilities they face throughout the year. Districts were ranked according to their vulnerability to food insecurity. The ranking exercise used information on access to and availability of markets, health facilities, water, and education as well as the general physical environment, security, and presence and location of land mines. **The final 2003 NRVA report was released in December 2004**. Here are some of the findings relating to Nuristan:

- **Insufficient agricultural and fertile land, water, inability to expand cash crop production, no alternate sources of income, and poor access to health, education, and markets** (especially in the winter) have prevented the majority of people from being able to improve their livelihoods.
- **The most significant farming constraints** experienced by households in 2003 were lack of irrigation water, lack of oxen/traction power, lack of availability of farming land, lack of seeds, and lack of credit/cash.
- **Goat** ownership by households was highest in Nuristan (96%), Farah (88%), Badakhshan (82%) and Kunar (77%).
- Overall, **very few women** were involved in **agricultural activities**, though there were distinct provincial exceptions, such as Nuristan where 72% of women reported to be engaged in agricultural work.
- **Insecurity** was often a highly localised.
- **Water quality and quantity** problems existed throughout the country. In Nuristan, no households reported using **drinking water** from safe sources.
- **Aggravating factors to health** were poor water and sanitation, poor housing and inadequate heating, poor diets, and severe temperatures, all of which were common throughout Afghanistan. Three provinces had a particularly high percentage of households which were more than half a day away from, or had no access to, a health facility: Ghor (71%), Kunar (53%) and Nuristan (52%).
- Nationally, there was a **striking contrast in mortality rates** found in the NRVA sample between the better off households, where 37% of all deaths are **children under 5**, and the very poor, where 62% of all deaths were children and 5 years.
- **Lack of available and accessible formal education** was a problem across rural Afghanistan, particularly in the rain-fed areas and grazing lands. Literacy disparities between men and women were high, and gender disparities of school going children existed throughout the country.
- **Public transport** was limited throughout the country, thereby limiting opportunities for out of village work, and access to markets, health facilities and schools. This lack of transport was found to be more acute in the west, central highlands, north and eastern parts, which also have the longest winters, making travel during this season even more difficult.

- Nationwide, 38% of the sample was estimated to be **food-insecure** at some time of the year. The percentage for Nuristan and Kunar was below 20%, far below the national average. Although the provinces of Kunar and Nuristan showed the least number of people below the minimum kcal/capita/day and poor dietary diversity benchmarks, **pockets of vulnerability** did exist when looking at district and sub-district data.
- **The main priorities** identified across the sample were directly related to improving livelihoods and addressing constraints: **improved water supply, roads, health, education, and better veterinary services**.
- The provinces with the highest use of **traditional healers** for health care were Laghman (96%) and Nuristan (92%).
- The highest percentages of households with **access to electricity** were reported in Paktia (40%), Khost (31%) and Nuristan (29%). Village generators were the main electricity source in these three provinces.
- The province with the highest percentage of **women** involved in **income generating activities outside the home** was Nuristan.
- The provinces with the highest percentage of **households with at least one physically disabled member were Nuristan (27%)** and Herat (24%). The national average was 13%.
- **Household characteristics:**
  Median size: Nuristan **9** persons National median: **7** persons
- **School attendance:** national sample average: boys: 30%, girls 11%
  Nuristan: boys 12%, girls 10%



Wheat cultivation in Nik Mok, Barg-e-Matal. Photo: Borje Almqvist, 1985

The NRVA 2005 was conducted by the Vulnerability Analysis Unit (VAU) of MRRD together with the Central Statistics Office (CSO) and WFP. In this second NRVA, all rural and urban areas in Afghanistan have been covered, based on representative sampling for the provinces, the ten largest urban areas and the migratory Kuchi population. The final report will be published later in 2006. According to personal communication from WFP/the NRVA 2005 team, most of Nuristan is classified as seasonally food-insecure. In March 2006, the first sub-study of the NRVA 2005 was published, namely the District Market Prices. As regards Nuristan, the following information was presented:

- The NRVA 2005 local wheat grain prices revealed a strong connection with remoteness, bad road conditions, civil insecurity and wheat deficit areas. Local wheat grain prices ranged from 7 Afs to 14 Afs/kilo. In Nuristan, the price ranged between 13 and 14 Afs/kilo.
- As for imported wheat grain, Badakhshan and Nuristan had the highest prices (14-15 Afs/kilo).
- Comparison of the NRVA 2005 with the NRVA 2003 data shows that the price of wheat increased, with a few exceptions, namely Nuristan and the Central Highlands.
- Nuristan showed the highest number of districts with the highest price for imported rice (36-40 Afs/kilo).
- In June-July 2005, the agriculture wages ranged from 60 to 275 Afs/person/day across the country. Several districts of Nuristan were among the districts with the lowest wages (60-100 Afs/person/day). This is explained in the following way in the report: "The low wages level for agricultural daily wages in Nuristan in the East of the country could be linked to the fact that a big part of the agriculture is managed by women. They have a very low land ownership and there is little demand for agricultural workers."

9 HEALTH

> **Article 52 Health Care, Hospitals, Physical Education, Sports**
> "1. The state is obliged to provide free means of preventive health care and medical treatment, and proper health facilities to all citizens of Afghanistan in accordance with the law.
> 2. The state encourages and protects the establishment and expansion of private medical services and health centres in accordance with law.
> 3. The state in order to promote physical education and improve national and local sports adopts necessary measures."
> From the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, 2004

Afghanistan's health indicators are among the worst in the world, with large gender gaps. According to The State of the World's Children 2006, published by UNICEF, the under-five mortality rate (U5MR) in Afghanistan is 257 per 1,000 live births, the infant mortality rate is 165 per 1,000 live births, and the maternal mortality ratio (MMR) reported by Afghan authorities is 1,600 per 100,000 live births. Due to underreporting and misclassification, UNICEF/WHO/UNFPA have adjusted this MMR figure to 1,900. The percentage of under-fives suffering from moderate or severe stunting is 54 per cent. Disability rates due to polio, cerebral palsy, and conflict (including landmines) are very high (UNICEF b, 2005). There are strong indications that the health situation in Nuristan is far worse than the national average. Several sources (see below) confirm that maternal and infant mortality and morbidity in Nuristan are extremely high.

The most common medical problems and diseases reported in Nuristan are as follows:
- **reproductive health problems**
- **tuberculosis**
- **acute respiratory infections (ARI)** in winter
- **diarrhoea** in summer
- **ubiquitous worm infestations, scabies, impetigo**
- **goitre**
- **typhoid**
- **high levels of chronic or seasonal malnutrition in some areas**
- **back and leg problems** due to heavy physical work
- **broken arms and legs** caused by accidents in the steep mountains and the many-storey houses; **other injuries including gunshot and mine wounds** and **burns**

Malaria is a problem only in low altitude areas. A few cases of **rabies** and **leprosy** are reported. In some areas **snake bites** constitute a danger. There are no data on **HIV/AIDS** and other sexually transmitted diseases. It is generally thought that the incidence of HIV/AIDS is still low in Nuristan.

Many, probably most, health problems could be avoided by basic health care education, good nutrition, vaccines and potable water. According to UNICEF (2005a), less than 30 per cent of the population has access to a safe water source. According to the 2003 NRVA, no households reported using drinking water from safe sources. Cf. Chapter 8, The National Risk and Vulnerability Assessments.

Data on health in Nuristan from UNICEF, 2005
Child health. In August 2005, UNICEF published a "Best Estimates Provincial Fact Sheet for Nuristan". It must be **emphasised that the data provided are estimates**. UNICEF uses a **very low population figure** for the calculations. The correct figures may be very different, and the variations between and within the districts are considerable. Births are often not registered. Cf. Population in Chapter 2, above. The "Fact Sheet" includes the following information on child health in Nuristan:

- Under-5 mortality rate	270
- Polio vaccination coverage	44.3%
- DPT vaccination coverage	19.7%
- Measles vaccination coverage	68.5%
- Households consuming iodised salt	7.1%
- Children 1-4 years with at least one form of disability	4.1%

Maternal health. The UNICEF "Best Estimates Provincial Fact Sheet for Nuristan", dated August 2005, also has some data on maternal health in Nuristan:

- Births attended by skilled birth attendant	1.4%
- Births delivered at home	100%
- Expectant mothers receiving ante-natal care	2%

Recommendations: Based on the indicators above, UNICEF recommends for Nuristan an increased routine immunisation coverage against vaccine-preventable diseases, increased access to safe water sources, and improved access and usage of quality obstetric care services closer to women's homes, and the availability of competent maternal health professionals in the community.

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The Basic Package of Health Services (BPHS) was presented by the Afghan Ministry of Public Health in March 2003, as a result of cooperation between the Ministry and the major donors in the health sector (USAID, The World Bank/IDA, the European Commission and UNICEF), NGOs and UN agencies. It provides a standardised list of basic services, including maternal and newborn health, child health and immunisation, public nutrition, and communicable disease control, which should all form the core of primary health care facilities. BPHS is designed to promote redistribution of services in order to improve access and benefit the most under-served areas. Every province should have good medical facilities for emergency obstetric care.

Since late 2005, **the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan (SCA) is the implementing partner of the Ministry of Public Health for the BPHS in Nuristan**. A contract called **the Performance-Based Partnership Agreement (PPA)** has been signed between SCA and the Ministry of Public Health. Funding is provided by the European Commission for 20 months.

The Swedish Committee for Afghanistan has valuable experience and expertise from successful implementation of the BPHS in two other provinces, namely Kunduz and Wardak.

The official public health priorities in Afghanistan are:
1. reduction in under-five mortality
2. reduction in maternal mortality
3. addressing malnutrition
4. prevention and control of communicable diseases
5. addressing inequitable distribution of health services
6. capacity building

CONTENTS

Saving Women's Lives
"Reproductive health investments yield huge benefits, especially for poor people who are least able to access these services. Among all human development indicators, those for reproductive health show the starkest inequities between the rich and the poor (both within and between countries). In any country, a poor woman is more likely than a rich woman to die in childbirth, and the disparities between developing and developed countries are profound... The poorest, who are the least able to access these services, will gain the most from investments in reproductive health care. Women dying in childbirth or suffering pregnancy-related illnesses is not only tragic, but it is also a violation of their human rights to life and to health. The right to health care increases the likelihood that they survive pregnancy and childbirth."

From "Reducing Poverty and Achieving The Millenium Development Goals: Arguments for Investing in Reproductive Health & Rights", UNFPA, 2005.

"The considerable, and largely preventable, burden of poor reproductive health falls most heavily on the poorest women and their families, who can least afford its consequences. The ability to make free and informed choices in reproductive life, including those involving child-bearing, underpins self-determination in all other areas of women's lives. Because these issues affect women so profoundly, reproductive health cannot be separated from the wider goal of gender equality. Reproductive health problems comprise the leading cause of death and disability for women the world over.

Every minute [in the world] a woman dies from the complications of childbirth and pregnancy, and another 20 are seriously injured or disabled. And when a mother dies giving birth, her infant's chances of survival plummet. Motherless newborns are three to ten times more likely to die than others.

...maternal death is practically non-existent in developed regions...

The lack of progress in reducing maternal mortality in many countries highlights the low value placed on the lives of women and testifies to their limited voice in setting public priorities. The lives of many women in developing countries could be saved with reproductive health interventions that people in rich countries take for granted.

Adolescent girls between the ages of 15 and 19 are twice as likely to die during pregnancy or childbirth as women in their twenties. For those under 15, the risks are five times higher. And for every girl who dies in childbirth, many more will suffer injuries, infections and lingering disabilities, such as obstetric fistula. Fistulas are reparable if services are available, and UNFPA has led a global campaign to bring hope into these girls' lives... Fistula typically affects girls and young women living in poor and remote areas with inadequate or non-existent health services, as well as those who deliver at home without professional care."

From The State of the World Population 2005, UNFPA, 2005

The maternal mortality ratio*, as defined by UNFPA, presents the number of deaths to women per 100,000 live births which result from conditions related to pregnancy, delivery

*" There are three distinct measures of maternal mortality in widespread use: the maternal mortality ratio, the maternal mortality rate, and the lifetime risk of maternal death. The most commonly used measure is the maternal mortality ratio, that is the number of maternal deaths during a given time period per 100 000 live births during the same time period. This is a measure of the risk of death once a woman has become pregnant. The maternal mortality rate, that is, the number of maternal deaths in a given period per 100 000 women of reproductive age during the same time period, reflects the frequency with which women are exposed to risk through fertility. The lifetime risk of maternal death takes into account both the probability of becoming pregnant and the probability of dying as a result of that pregnancy cumulated across a woman's reproductive years" (AbouZahr, 2003).
Another definition of the maternal mortality rate is "The number of maternal deaths related to childbearing divided by the number of live births + foetal deaths) in that year."

and related complications. According to UNFPA (b, 2005), the national maternal mortality ratio in Afghanistan is 1,900, one of the very highest in the world. The Nuristani maternal mortality rate may be as high as 7,000. See below. The maternal mortality ratio in Sweden is 2, the lowest in the world (UNFPA b, 2005).

It has been estimated that some 23,000 Afghan mothers die in childbirth every year, making it the country's leading cause of death for women. It has been characterised as a public health catastrophe with few parallels elsewhere in the world (www.afgha.com, 30 May 2004).

According to statistics from the Ministry of Public Health, Afghan women have a life expectancy of 43 years and, on average, will bear seven children. In 2001, the Population Action International (PAI) estimated that one in 16 Afghan women who have no access to adequate pre-natal care is likely to die from pregnancy-related complications. Cf. Dr Kathleen Cita's findings in Bashgal in 1986, below: one in 17 women had died of causes directly attributed to child birth. Regarding maternal mortality, PAI ranked Afghanistan second to last of all countries in the world. (According to The World Bank, Afghan women have the highest rate of pregnancy-related deaths in the world.) In 2004, the British Agencies Afghanistan Group (BAAG) wrote: "Clearly reproductive health [in Afghanistan] is one of the most pressing health needs to be met, and contraception will play a crucial part in improving the health and potential life span of both mothers and their children" (BAAG, 2004).

Moreover, when a mother dies, the newborn faces a much higher risk of death – as much as ten times higher than an infant with a mother's care.

UNFPA often points out that parents with fewer children can invest more in their nutrition, health and education. UNFPA also stresses that, to overcome poverty, governments must deal with population concerns and fight poor reproductive health, unwanted fertility, illiteracy and discrimination against women.

Tuberculosis (TB). TB is another severe health problem in Nuristan. Especially women are affected. Crowded and confined living conditions and lack of access to health facilities, especially for women, for consistent drug therapy are critical barriers to controlling TB. There are strong indications that TB is increasing in Nuristan. Many patients do not complete the full anti TB therapy, and this may result in drug resistance.

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Current health facilities. There is an enormous shortage of well-functioning medical facilities in Nuristan. A map showing the existing health facilities in June 2005, with catchments and population density, is presented in Appendix 3.

Herbal remedies. Appendix 2, In Nuristan, Heavy Reliance on Herbal Remedies, describes the most common herbal remedies, including opium as tranquilisers for children, in Nangarage and DoAb. The article ends: "… a woman has either to stay confined to home or the grave. To him [a 60-year-old male villager], it´s plain dishonour taking your wife to the doctor at the time of delivery. Speaking to this news agency, Nangraj [Nangarage] district

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WHO defines maternal death as "the death of a woman while pregnant or within 42 days of termination of pregnancy, irrespective of the duration and site of the pregnancy, from any cause related to or aggravated by the pregnancy or its management but not from accidental or incidental causes."

chief Engineer Nawroz deplores the persistent dearth of health facilities. He urges charitable organisations to help his bailiwick in areas of health education and training, and assures them of full security…" (Pajhwok Afghan News, 21 February 2006).

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UNHCR District Profiles conducted in 2002: Health

Barg-e-Matal District: There was one health clinic with two nurses/midwives. A consultation fee was charged, discouraging families without cash from attending. Difficult cases were referred to Chitral or Jalalabad. A Kushtuz woman who had been in labour for ten days but unable to give birth had been referred to Jalalabad, but she was too sick to travel through the mountains…

In addition, there was one ATA clinic (Anti-TB Association, funded by the Norwegian Church Aid, NCA). Some Community Health Workers/TB (CHW/TB) and 12 Traditional Birth Attendants (TBA) had been trained by Afghan Aid. Lack of salaries/stipends had discouraged the staff from working. It was reported that every family had TB cases. People in the mountains delayed going to the clinic until the illness became very serious. Mortality from treatable illnesses was high. Children died from chest problems and diarrhoea, and older persons from respiratory problems and TB. Malnutrition was a problem, many families ate only bread and cheese.

DoAb District: One clinic funded by the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan (SCA), with two male doctors and four nurses, but no midwife. The capacity was insufficient for the needs of the community, and the supplies of medicine were inadequate. Difficult cases were referred to Laghman. There were many malnourished children. The most common diseases were reported to be TB, malaria, goitre and typhoid. The community requested a malnutrition ward, midwives and a maternity ward, and more clinics in remote areas.

Kamdesh District: One health clinic run by the Aide Médicale Internationale (AMI), with one doctor, Dr Amin, and four assistants, and TB testing facilities. No female doctor. All gynaecological and obstetric cases were referred to Chitral and Jalalabad. According to Dr Amin, the main health problems were as follows:

Acute Respiratory Infection (ARI), pneumonia, in winter
Diarrhoea, in summer
Dysentery
Malnutrition, a few severe cases, most cases were moderate
TB (main causes related to lack of sanitation, inadequate housing, poverty and keeping animals at home)
Scabies ['skabb' in Swedish]
Impetigo ['svinkoppor' in Swedish]
Urinary Tract Infections (UTI)
Gynaecological and obstetric problems [last but not least?]

Mortality from treatable illnesses was high. In the Kushtuz village, mines were planted continuously [due to clan feuds; see Chapter 2, Basic Facts and Summary, above], but there was no treatment for the mine victims, most of whom were women and children. UNICEF assisted with measles vaccinations and WHO with polio eradication.

Mandol District: There were no health facilities in the district. When a patient needed to be taken for treatment, around twenty persons reportedly carried him/her in turns for one and a half day to the clinic in DoAb District. Those who were suffering from appendicitis, difficult childbirths or bullet wounds frequently died on the way. The patient was normally buried on the spot due to the difficulty in transporting the body back home. On their way to Mandol, the UNHCR district profiling team noted around 30 families carrying their patients to the clinic. The main diseases reported were TB, goitre, malaria and typhoid. It was reported that some vaccination programmes had taken place. The community elders made an urgent plea for improved roads and a health facility in the district, claiming this as a basic human right.

Nangarage [also called Noor Gram] District: There was no clinic in the district, and patients had to travel long distances by donkey or be carried by relatives to DoAb or Alingar [in Laghman Province] districts. There were no midwives or nurses in Nangarage. The only health interventions reported were vaccination programmes.

Parun Provincial Centre: There was one clinic with one doctor, two nurses, two vaccinators, one health educator and 10 TBAs trained by the Public Health Hospital in Nangarhar. The clinic

was constructed and run by the International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC). The community reported that the clinic suffered from a shortage of medicine. They also stated that a midwife was needed.
Wama District: There was one clinic with one doctor, one nurse, one pharmacist, one technician and four support staff. The clinic was established in 1994 and supported by the Peshawar-kai Medical Services (PMS, a Japanese NGO). The clinic had only an outpatients' department (OPD). Treatment and medicines were free of charge. A need for midwives and a nutrition programme was reported. There was a high incidence of TB, but no anti-TB medicine. There had earlier been an SCA clinic in Wama, but it had been closed for lack of funds. Community elders requested more vaccination programmes.
Waigal District: There was one clinic run by the Norwegian Afghanistan Committee (NAC) with 18 staff members, including one doctor, two male nurses, one female nurse, one midwife, one TB technician and one dentist. It had an outpatients' department (OPD) and an emergency ward with four beds. There were no charges for OPD consultations and medicine. Earlier NAC had trained some 100 TBAs, and carried out vaccination programmes.

The situation in Bashgal in 1986. In the autumn of 1986, an American paediatrician, Dr Kathleen Cita, worked for two months in an area covering 15 villages in Bashgal where she met some 1,200 patients. Some of her observations were as follows:
- The general impression was that people were poor, but they lived adequately, perhaps better than before the war. Their clothing was often ragged, but there was very little frank malnutrition. [Malnutrition is often seasonal; the autumn is harvesting time.]
- Local persons still lived largely by barter. Supplies from the outside came from Pakistan. There was no trade with Kabul.
- Since 1979, there had been very little active fighting in Nuristan.
- The Nuristanis in 1986 were a rare example of people living relatively harmoniously with their environment.
- Men ate first and best, and the elderly ate better than the young. Most food was well cooked, but meat was sometimes consumed raw, sliced off the still warm animal just after slaughter. This habit contributed to the incidence of tapeworm in the region.
- Virtually all the infants were breast fed. Significant problems were the delayed introduction of adequate proteins, inadequate variety, the giving of dirty left-over food, and the severe maternal anaemia cases which were transmitted to the children and aggravated by their ubiquitous worm infestations.
- Medical services in Nuristan were virtually nonexistent. There were no midwives or TBAs. Women were delivered by their female relatives.
- Traditional medicine consisted primarily of local burning, the wrapping of the skin of a newly slaughtered goat around the sick or injured person, and the withholding of certain "hot" or "cold" foods from the sick person.
- The previous winter an epidemic of classic pertussis with spasmodic cough had killed about 90 children in two villages, i.e. some 50 per cent of the children under five.
- Common infectious diseases were tuberculosis, scrofula, cough with chronic adenitis, or Pott's disease and acute pneumonia.
- Abscesses, impetigo and pediculosis were common. Worm infestation was ubiquitous. Ascaris was extremely common in children, and many adults were infested with taenea. Anaemia in women was a serious problem.
- Trachoma was extremely common, with perhaps 15-20 per cent bearing the stigmata of the disease. Even children as young as 2-3 years old were affected.
- Perhaps 90 per cent of the adult female population and 20-30 per cent of the men were affected by iodine deficiency goitre. Two or three cases of mild retardation with deafness were seen.
- Dental hygiene was so bad that there were two-year-olds without a single healthy tooth. Many young adults were edentulous [had missing teeth].

- Less frequent problems were rheumatic heart disease (4 cases), sterility (about 10 cases - TB?), obstructive prostatic hypertrophy (4 cases), birth injuries in children and mothers, and hyperventilation syndrome.
-Significant in their relative rarity were diarrhoea in general and weanling diarrhoea in particular.
- Almost every patient complained about backache and epigastric pain, but anaemia, trachoma and goitre were rarely mentioned although a very high percentage suffered from these illnesses.
- As could be predicted in this remote region, many healthy persons came to the clinic just to see what was happening and to get a few pills for the future.

In Barg-e-Matal village, Dr Cita collected information on 104 women and 490 pregnancies. The total number of children born to women 40 years and older was eight per woman. Seven per cent of the women had died of causes directly attributed to childbirth. Some additional observations were as follows:
- Umbilical cords were normally cut immediately after birth with a non-sterile knife. Razor blades were rare.
- The cords were dressed with a variety of materials including tobacco, ash, crushed nuts, salt or dirt warmed or fried in butter.
- An additional dangerous practice seen in about 30 per cent of the families was placing soil or cow dung warmed in butter on the baby's bottom, "to keep him dry."

Dr Cita ended her report by recommending: "Curative medicine however will have a limited impact on actual mortality. Preventive services such as sanitation, "clean cord kits" and vaccination programmes, if they can be carried out, will have the greatest potential for improving survival."

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NGOs, International Agencies and PRTs in the Health Sector in Nuristan.

The Ministry of Public Health has had extremely limited resources to provide health services in Nuristan in the past. With the Basic Package of Health Services (BPHS) being introduced in late 2005 by the Ministry of Public Health in cooperation with the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan (SCA), major improvements in the health sector are expected. In recent years, the Ministry has been assisted by the following NGOs, international agencies and PRTs in Nuristan:

The Anti Tuberculosis Association/Afghanistan Programme (ATA/AP) has worked in Nuristan for many years. See Norwegian Church Aid (NCA), below.

The Danish Committee for Aid to Afghan Refugees (DACAAR) provided two water pipe schemes for safe water in Nishegram village (72 standposts) and Want village in Waigal district in the 1990s.

The International Assistance Mission (IAM), a multinational Christian organisation, is running several health projects in Afghanistan. The IAM flagship is the **NOOR** (Light) Eye Clinic. IAM/NOOR has been working in Afghanistan and among Afghan refugees in Pakistan since the 1970s.

In the western part of Nuristan, IAM/NOOR has offered temporary medical and/or eye treatment on several occasions:

May 1999 So called eye camp in DoAb (just before the SCA clinic was completed)
April 2000 Combined eye camp and medical-surgical camp in Mandol
June 2000 Small eye camp in Gandalabok
April 2001, June-July 2001, March and July 2003:
Home based non-surgical medical treatment all the way along the valley above Dane Pyar

After July 2003, IAM/NOOR has stopped its medical work in the western part of Nuristan for security reasons. IAM/NOOR has no plans to establish permanent facilities there in the near future (Personal communication from Hannelore Stein, IAM/NOOR, 12 March 2006).

In the central and eastern parts of Nuristan, IAM/NOOR held several eye camps in the past. In recent year, however, there has been only one mission: a small international and local eye care team came in through the Anjuman valley in September 2005 and spent a few days in Ishtawuy. There are no definite plans to return “unless a unique opportunity presents itself to bring a mobile eye care team there in the late summer.” The security situation is the preventing factor (Personal communication from Rob Antonucci, IAM/NOOR, 20 March 2006).

The International Medical Corps (IMC) is an American NGO. Reportedly, IMC will assist with training and medical supplies for the five health clinics being constructed with funds from USAID. See Appendix 3, and USAID, below.

IMC ran a winterisation programme in Barg-e-Matal and Kamdesh from January to June 2004 to "decrease the vulnerability to winter related illness" and to "increase household income." Quilts and warm clothes were distributed to 1,750 beneficiaries. A Cash For Work (CFW) programme consisted of 420 women sewing and knitting warm clothes for local distribution, and men (number not reported) rehabilitating roads, culverts and wash flows in Kamdesh. The final report concludes: "IMC staff in Nooristan in particular, faced serious problems implementing the program due to deteriorating conditions and potential danger for NGO workers in the area."

The Norwegian Afghanistan Committee (NAC) started working in Nuristan in 1986. A mobile health clinic and a dental clinic were established in Aranz in Waigal district. In 1994, a health clinic was built in Want. During 1994-96, some 100 Traditional Birth Attendants (TBAs) were trained. Women were very eager to learn about modern contraceptives. The cooperation between NAC and the local population went very smoothly, but at times problems were created by local commanders. In 2004, NAC handed over all the facilities in Nuristan to the Ministry of Public Health.

The Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) established a TB clinic with five sections: OPD, X-Ray, laboratory, dispensary and administration, in Barg-e-Matal in 1998. NCA was the donor, and the Anti Tuberculosis Association/Afghanistan Programme (ATA/AP) was the Implementing Partner. The clinic had a capacity to treat 300-400 TB patients per year. In addition, TB Control Centres were set up in Kamdesh, Want, Parun and Mandol. A Comprehensive Health Centre (CHC), with a doctor and a midwife, was opened in Barg-e-Matal in 2000. The clinic had capacity for 6,000-7,000 non-TB patients per year.

Later a Dental Unit was added to the CHC. In 2004, 20 TBAs were trained in Barg-e-Matal, and 20 TBAs in Kamdesh. In addition, a Health Education programme was started in Barg-e-Matal, Saidabad, Mondagal, Shudgal, Afsay, Kamdesh, Want, Parun and Mandol.

According to a news article (IRIN, 8 Feb. 2005), the CHC building in Barg-e-Matal has been emptied and is now being used as a base for a private militia protecting the district administrator.

The Norwegian Refugee Council (**NRC**) and **the Norwegian Project Office** (**NPO**; taken over by the Afghan government, and partly funded by NCA) have not been active in Nuristan in recent years. NPO, however, is working with the Rural Rehabilitation Association for Afghanistan (RRAA) in the neighbouring Alingar district in Laghman province.

Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs). In early March 2006, the TF76 Surgeon Cell of the Laghman PRT, accompanied by Marines, provided **"medical and veterinary assistance packages"** out of the medical clinics already in place in DoAb and Nangarage. The Surgeon Cell reported that the DoAb clinic was open on an irregular basis due to shortage of medical staff. The Nangarage clinic was open daily.

A **medical survey** conducted by the Surgeon Cell of the Laghman PRT in the **DoAb clinic** in March 2006 included the following information:

- Doctors: Dr Shamshir Khan and Dr Abdul Hakim
- Midwife: none
- Transportation available: none
- Equipment: minor surgery equipment, needles, scissors, bandages, first aid, no generator, no wiring, micro hydro during summer
- Five leading causes of death: tuberculosis, respiratory diseases, pneumonia, sepsis, meningitis, malnutrition [pregnancy-related complications not mentioned]
- Land mines: none known at this time

A **medical survey** conducted by the Surgeon Cell of the Laghman PRT in the **Nangarage clinic** in March 2006 included the following information:

- Doctors: 12 doctors including Dr Jan Mohammad, Clinic Director
- Midwife: Nurse Nasar Ahamid
- Transportation available: taxi
- Nearest hospital: Mehtarlam Hospital in Laghman
- Equipment: minor surgery equipment, freezer, bandages, first aid, antibiotics
- Five leading causes of death: unknown
- Endemic diseases: flue, pneumonia, common cold, tonsillitis, peptic disease and tuberculosis [pregnancy-related complications not mentioned]

The Social Development and Health Care Organisation (**SDHCO**), started in 1996, runs a mobile health clinic in Mandol. In addition, SDHCO has plans to start a gynaecological clinic in Mandol. It will be financed by the Government of India. The SDHCO is also supported by UNICEF. The Chief Executive of SDHCO is Dr Sayed Noorullah, also called Jalili. He worked as Medical Director of the **Afghan Red Crescent Society (ARCS)** in Parun from 1996 to 1997. At that time, ARCS was the only provider of medical services in Nuristan. Dr Sayed Noorullah and Governor Tamim Nuristani are cooperating closely.


The health clinic in DoAb in 2006. Photo: US PRT

The Swedish Committee for Afghanistan (SCA). For a long time, SCA has supported the health clinic in DoAb, as well as the health clinic in Wama.

In late 2005, SCA was awarded a contract by the Ministry of Public Health to implement the **Basic Package of Health Services (BPHS)** in Nuristan. This, in fact, means that SCA now has the responsibility for the implementation of all health care in the province. The funds for Phase I (20 months) are provided by the European Commission. SCA has valuable experience and medical expertise from successful implementation of the BPHS in Kunduz and Wardak.

The United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS). See USAID, below.

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID). In June 2004, the United States General Accounting Office (GAO) presented a report called "Afghanistan Reconstruction: Deteriorating Security and Limited Resources Have Impeded Progress; Improvement in U.S. Strategy Needed" to the United States Congress. The report revealed that only one province in Afghanistan, Nuristan, received no assistance at the provincial level from USAID. Since then, USAID has financed the construction of five clinics in Nuristan. UNOPS, in cooperation with local contractors, has been the implementing agency. See also Appendix 3, USAID/UNOPS Clinic Projects Summary Status, September 2005, with additional information, including a list of local contractors. Here follows an updated list of the progress of the construction of the five clinics:

District	Site	BHC/CHC	Current progress, March 2006
Parun	Pashki	CHC	50%
Wama	Wama	BHC	90%
Barg-e-Matal	Barg-e-Matal	CHC	38%
Kamdesh	Paprook Valley	BHC	25%
Nangarage	Nangarage	CHC	75%



Health clinic in Nangarage under construction with USAID/UNOPS support, April 2006. Photo: US PRT

The construction of the buildings has been delayed due to difficult accessibility (in some cases access only by donkey transporting people and materials, up to five days travelling), harsh weather conditions (heavy snowfall from October until May, thereafter floods), and security concerns. The plan is that the five clinics will be completed by November 2006 (Personal communication from Ronald Macdonald [*sic*], UNOPS, Jalalabad, 22 March 2006).

The World Bank is not active in the health sector in Nuristan.

The World Food Programme (WFP). WFP is supporting the Ministry of Public Health and WHO campaign to combat tuberculosis by providing food aid to patients. The assistance is available in selected health centres for TB-affected persons who undergo testing and follow WHO treatment. In 2006, an estimated 300 TB patients will receive a total of 181 metric tons of food. The take-home rations include wheat, oil, pulses and salt (Personal communication from Jackie Dent, WFP, Kabul, 16 March 2006).

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has run a polio eradication programme in Nuristan. A TB prevalence survey planned for 2006 will give a better assessment of the TB situation in Nuristan.

10 EDUCATION

"Article 16 Languages
1. From among the languages of Pashtu, Dari, Uzbeki, Turkmani, Baluchi, Pashai, Nuristani, Pamiri (alsana), Arab and other languages spoken in the country, Pashtu and Dari are the official languages of the state.
2. The Turkic languages (Uzbaki and Turkmen), Baluchi, Pashai, Nuristani and Pamiri (alsana) are -- in addition to Pashto and Dari -- the third official language in areas where the majority speaks them. The practical modalities for implementation of this provision shall be specified by law.
3. The state adopts and implements effective plans for strengthening, and developing all languages of Afghanistan.
4. Publications and radio and television broadcasting are allowed in all languages spoken in the country."

From the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, 2004

"Article 43 Education
1. Education is the right of all citizens of Afghanistan, which shall be provided up to the level of the B.A. (lisâns), free of charge by the state.
2. The state is obliged to devise and implement effective programs for a balanced expansion of education all over Afghanistan, and to provide compulsory intermediate level education.
3. The state is also required to provide the opportunity to teach native languages in the areas where they are spoken.

Article 44 Education for Women and Nomads, Illiteracy
The state shall devise and implement effective programs for balancing and promoting of education for women, improving of education of nomads and elimination of illiteracy in the country.

Article 45 Unified Educational Curriculum
The state shall devise and implement a unified educational curriculum based on the provisions of the sacred religion of Islam, national culture, and in accordance with academic principles, and develop the curriculum of religious subjects on the basis of the Islamic sects existing in Afghanistan."

From the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, 2004

"The potential contribution of a revitalised education system to the resolution of Afghanistan's many difficult problems is immense. Education is at the core of the long-term programme to rebuild Afghanistan, enabling progress in all other development arenas as well as facilitating national unity. While the challenges facing the education system are enormous, there is a prevailing atmosphere of excitement, expectation, and determination in schools and communities throughout the country."

Excerpt from A Guide to Government in Afghanistan, AREU and The World Bank, 2004

"Illiteracy is the source of many problems in Afghanistan. With literacy people get access to information and information is what brings changes in people. Positive changes such as improved human development and human security are things people can do for themselves but they need to be empowered with information and knowledge through literacy."

From the Afghanistan National Human Development Report 2004, 2005

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

"… ***a warning to prevent a new cycle of further instability and renewed conflict***: The existence of 'horizontal inequalities', defined in this report as differentiated access to socio-economic opportunities, resources and power-sharing among various groups, could create a reality of multiple experiences within Afghanistan. Horizontal inequalities could renew deep-rooted conflicts when they combine identity with inequality in a historically or emotionally charged situation. Power inequalities and asymmetries in Afghanistan today include sources of long-term as well as short-term grievances, ranging from economic inequality to imbalances stemming from gender, geography, religion, ethnicity, etc. Because these grievances have been manipulated to fuel conflict in the past, their continued existence is not only unfair, but also potentially dangerous.

In the future, preventing conflicts will require targeting and responding to root causes, both internal and external. With the new sovereignty of Afghanistan, a window of opportunities has opened to build a sustainable peace based on popular aspirations and participation. The human security challenge in Afghanistan today is for a devolution of power to take place at the same time that power is consolidated at the centre. Striking the right balance will call for the state to provide human security as a public good, while at the same time incorporating public participation in the peace-building process."

From Afghanistan National Human Development Report 2004, Kabul, 2005

Primary school attendance. According to the Afghan constitution, primary school education is a universal right and obligation. Parents are required to send both boys and girls to school. UNICEF (2005a) estimates that the net primary school attendance in Nuristan is 35.8 per cent, with girls' attendance 33.1 per cent. These figures, however, are based on a very low population estimate. Cf. Population in Chapter 2, Basic Facts and Summary. If Governor Tamim Nuristani's population estimate is used, the primary school attendance is very much lower, with a very low percentage for boys and even lower for girls. See UNHCR District Profiles 2002, below.

Appendix 4, Nuristan Province: Education Sector Map, shows the distribution of boys' schools and girls' schools in August 2003, with the number of schoolboys, schoolgirls, male teachers and female teachers. (Unfortunately, there is no later map on the subject.)

Bari children (see Chapter 2, Basic Facts and Summary) have a considerably lower school attendance than other Nuristani children,

Native languages. Article 43 of the Constitution states that native languages should be taught in areas were they are spoken. However, there are no school-books in any Nuristani languages, and there are no Nuristani radio programmes for school children.

Limited capacity and resources. According to Governor Tamim Nuristani, there are 152 schools in Nuristan, but only 20 of them have a building (The Pakistan Observer, 17 Sept. 2005). The shortage of note-books and text-books is felt everywhere. School-books, if any, are in Pashtu or Dari. There is a scarcity of adequately trained teachers, especially female teachers, and they receive their low salaries on an irregular basis. Most schools have no female teacher. The annual provincial budget for education in Nuristan is extremely limited. At all levels, qualified educators and managers are scarce.

Gender aspects. More girls than boys are out of school, and the gap widens with every grade. See The Swedish Committee for Afghanistan, below. Almost all the teachers are men. The first girls' school in Nuristan was started in Kamdesh in 1960, but almost all families give priority to boys' education. The girls have to look after their younger brothers and sisters, and/or work in the fields with their mother.



Most girls in Nuristan do not attend primary school. Photo: Axiom Film, 2005

> "The main conflict seems to be between the parents' view of what their sons will do in life and the parents' perception of the extent to which the school can help achieve this. Two or three years of local school is generally regarded as a waste of time. An oft-heard complaint in Nuristan is that of the father who said: **'What they have learned is of no use in the village, and while they have been learning it, they have been kept from learning what *is* of use'** (emphasis added).
>
> In some villages there seems to be a conflict in the minds of parents who think that formal education has its advantages, but still want their children to follow the traditional life of the village and the mountains. At the present time, given the nature of formal education in Nuristan, these two wants appear to be incompatible. Realising this, a few fathers have tried to solve the problem by keeping one or two sons at home to learn the management of family affairs, and sending one or two sons away to school to learn Persian and Pushtu and other skills needed in Afghanistan today. In 1968-69 nearly 100 boys from Waigal Valley alone were attending school outside Nuristan – most of them in Kabul..."
>
> From Nuristan by Lennart Edelberg and Schuyler Jones, 1979

> "For poor families, the cost of sending girls to school needs to be weighed carefully against the possible benefits, an analysis which often reflects and reinforces gender norms. In societies where women's life options are typically limited to marriage and child-bearing, for instance, a girl's education may be considered a luxury, especially after her contribution to household chores, agricultural work and child or elder care is factored in. Moreover, marriage may be seen as a transfer of the investment in daughters to another family, with little benefit to the girl's parents.
>
> To realise the full benefits of girls' education, countries need to overcome the barriers that keep girls from attending school. Effective strategies to close gender gaps in education focus on poor communities and address specific obstacles. The safety of daughters in school and in transit to and from school, for instance, is an important issue for parents. This can be addressed by adding female teachers, improving security measures, reducing travel times by increasing the number of schools and generally making schools more "girl-friendly". (Simply adding a separate washroom for girls can make a difference.) Eliminating school fees and other costs can lower economic hurdles... success with offers of free school meals, subsidies and scholarships. Efforts to improve enrolment at the secondary level are vital, including special efforts to retain married and pregnant adolescents."
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> From The State of the World Population 2005, UNFPA, 2005

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UNHCR District Profiles. In 2002, UNHCR prepared district profiles for all districts in Nuristan. The sections on education presented a gloomy picture:

- Literacy rates ranged from an estimated 0 percent in DoAb, Mandol, Nangarage and Wama, to 5 per cent in Barg-e-Matal, Kamdesh and Waigal; and 8 per cent in Parun.
- Mandol, with an estimated population of 75,000 people, had 4,755 boys and 949 girls in school. "There is an acute need for more schools throughout the district."
- In Kamdesh, there were 28 primary schools, but only one with a building, and it had been occupied by the district authorities. Teacher student/student ratio: 1:50. There were no books or stationery available. No salaries were paid to the teachers. There were no female teachers. "The subjects consist of Pashto, The Holy Quoran and Mathematics (Persian for the 4th class). UNICEF has introduced literacy classes for the students from 1-4pm as previously they left school and are still being unable to read and write..."

- In DoAb, with an estimated population of 85,000 [*sic*] people, there was **one** primary school, with 150 boys and 14 male teachers. No girl student. No female teacher. "There is only one primary school which was built during the Taliban time, the building of which is now destroyed. Many children study in the mosques. The community reported that they are ready to send their children to school but are unable to do so because of lack of educational facilities. They stated that there should be a primary school in each village and a high school in the district centre."
- In Nangarage, with an estimated population of 50,000 people, there were 2,300 boys and 50 girls going to school. 113 male teachers, no female teachers. "It was reported that many children are unable to attend school due to the long distances from outlying villages."
- In Parun, with an estimated population of 5,000, there were 3 primary schools with 400 girls and 608 boys. 28 male teachers, no female teachers. "The schools are religious schools and were constructed by the community. They are not registered with the Government and have no furniture. UNICEF distributed some stationery, school-books and school bags in 2002. The teachers don't receive salaries from the Government but the residents of the area jointly pay the teachers' salaries."

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In 2001, the prominent Nuristan authority Professor Max Klimburg reported that, in all of Nuristan, there were only some six (Arab supported) 'primary *madrasa*', or mosque schools, and a few (Western NGO supported) secular primary schools for boys and girls. Prof. Klimburg defines the term *madrasa* as a religious college or even university for men, while 'mosque schools' provide marginal primary schooling for boys and girls.

> "With virtually no other prospects many Nuristani boys are sent each year to attend one of the thousands of *dini-madrasa* in Pakistan, which provide them for years with free education, board and lodging until graduating as mullahs–adding them to the very many unemployed mullahs already populating Nuristan."
>
> From "The Situation in Nuristan" by Professor Max Klimburg, 2001

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NGOs, International Agencies and PRTs in the Education Sector

The Nuristani Provincial Education Department of the Ministry of Education has extremely limited resources to provide education in Nuristan, and the education sector in Nuristan is not getting much support from the outside world. The following list is probably almost complete:

The Afghan German Basic Education (**AGBE**, also abbreviated **AG BAS-Ed)** started working in Nuristan in 1999 by constructing a primary school in Want. In 2000, six additional primary schools for boys and girls were established in Want and Wama. After these seven schools were handed over to the Provincial Education Department in 2003, AG BAS-Ed withdrew its support. As of October 2005, AG BAS-Ed is running 15 home-based schools, in the so called Out of School Children Programme (OSCP), in Kamdesh. There are plans to expand this programme. AG BAS-Ed is also involved in civic education, road construction

and irrigation channel rehabilitation in different parts of Nuristan. The provincial office is located in Want (Information from Mr Najeebullah, Director, AG BAS-Ed, October 2005).

The Nooristan Foundation (**NF**) was established in 1999 in Washington, DC in the United States for the purpose of "providing charitable, scientific and educational support to the rural areas of Afghanistan." Through the support of **the American Red Cross Fund for Afghan Children, the Afghanistan Reconstruction Association, Humanity in Crisis, Afghans 4 Tomorrow** and private donations, NF has assisted in establishing and supporting three schools in Nuristan. They are located in Kurdar, Archano and Wama. Some 650 boys and girls attend these schools, which are staffed by three headmasters and twelve teachers. In addition, NF is supporting a boarding school in which orphans are fed and cared for.

The Social Development and Health Care Organisation (**SDHCO**), started in 1996, is supporting a primary school in Waigal with a building, school furniture and teaching materials. Also other schools are being supplied with teaching materials by SDHCO. The SDHCO, in turn, is supported by UNICEF. The Chief Executive of SDHCO is Dr Sayed Noorullah, also called Jalili. Dr Sayed Noorullah and Governor Tamim Nuristani are cooperating closely.



A young agricultural worker not going to school, 2005. Photo: Axiom Film

The Swedish Committee for Afghanistan (SCA) is supporting one co-educational primary school in Nuristan. It is located in Nangal Village in Kamdesh District. SCA has supported this school since 1994 with teacher training, monitoring, textbooks and stationery. Up till April 2005, SCA also paid the teachers' salaries. Since then the teachers' salaries have been paid by the Ministry of Education. The school has 179 students, as follows:

Grades	Boys	Girls	Total	% of Total	Gender Parity Index
Grade 1	18 (10.1%)	19 (10.6%)	37	20.7%	1.06
Grade 2	17 (9.5%)	17 (9.5%)	34	19.0%	1.00
Grade 3	22 (12.3%)	19 (10.6%)	41	22.9%	0.86
Grade 4	14 (7.8%)	8 (4.5%)	22	12.3%	0.57
Grade 5	13 (7.3%)	9 (5.0%)	22	12.3%	0.69
Grade 6	18 (10.1%)	5 (2.8%)	23	12.8%	0.28
Total	102 (57%)	77 (43%)	179	100%	0.75

The school has nine teachers, eight male and one female. The average number of students per teacher is 20. The language of instruction is Pashtu, not a native Nuristani language. The drop-out rate for girls after grade 3 is high. The Gender Parity Index in Grade 1 is 1.06. In Grade 6, it is 0.28.

The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) is the major funder of UNICEF's primary education programme focussing on girls in Afghanistan.

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). The following data on UNICEF support to the primary education sector in Nuristan were received from UNICEF in Jalalabad in November 2005:

	2004	2005 (up to Oct.)
No. of children receiving learning materials	23,360	18,611
No. of teachers receiving teaching materials	692	1,020
No. of teachers trained, male	360	402
No. of teachers trained, female	**0**	**0**
No. of primary schools constructed	1	0
No. of primary schools rehabilitated	4	0
No. of Community Based Schools (CBS) established	0	0
No. of temporary learning spaces set-up	31	12
No. of safe water points in schools established	0	5
No. of sanitary latrines for schools established	41	5

In January 2005, there was a total of 29,625 students (not disaggregated by sex) and 1,020 teachers (not disaggregated by sex) in grades 1-12 in Nuristan, according to UNICEF. Later figures (early 2006) from the Department of Education suggest a higher number: 25,009 boys and 15,426 girls, total 40,435 students (Information from Eng. Mohd. Ibrahim, UNICEF, Jalalabad, 30 March 2006).

In the spring of 2006, the Nuristani Department of Education, with technical and financial support from UNICEF, will start a women's literacy programme for some 2,240 women aged between 15 and 49 years. Three Master Trainers have already been trained in Kabul. They, in turn, will train 75 teachers to run 75 literacy classes in Nuristan (Information from Dr Sayed Saeed, UNICEF, Jalalabad, 16 March 2006).

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID). In June 2004, the United States General Accounting Office (GAO) presented a report called "Afghanistan Reconstruction: Deteriorating Security and Limited Resources Have Impeded Progress; Improvement in U.S. Strategy Needed" to the United States Congress. The report revealed that only **one** province in Afghanistan, Nuristan, received no assistance at the provincial level from USAID.

Since then, USAID has financed the construction of twelve **primary school buildings** in Nuristan. UNOPS, in cooperation with local contractors, has been the implementing agency. See also Appendix 5, USAID/UNOPS School Projects Summary Status, September 2005, with additional information. Here follows an updated list of the twelve schools:

District	Site	Rooms	Current progress, March 2006
Kamdesh	Kamdesh	9	91%
	Goverdesh	6	88%
	Pati Gal	10	100%
	Kamo/Merdesh	9	88%
Barg-e-Matal	Chapo	9	77%
	Nik Mok	10	88%
	Barg-e-Matal	9	77%
Parun	Shtivy	9	92%
	Pronce	9	93%
	Dewa	9	92%
	Pashki	9	60%
Wama	Bar Korder	9	66%

The construction of the buildings has been delayed due to difficult accessibility (in several cases access only by donkey transporting people and materials, up to five days travelling), harsh weather conditions (heavy snowfall from October until May, thereafter floods), and security concerns. The Goverdesh school in Kamdesh was sabotaged twice in 2005. The plan is that the twelve school houses will be completed by November 2006 (Personal communication from Ronald Macdonald, UNOPS, Jalalabad, 22 March 2006).

On the national level, USAID is supporting primary education through "programmes aimed at strengthening ministry capacity, improving teacher performance and skills development, and ensuring adequate school materials and environments for learning." 48.5 million text-books in Dari and Pashtu for grades 1-12 have been distributed. An expanded **radio-teacher training** programme is now reaching 65,000 teachers in daily broadcasts to all 34 provinces (USAID Fact Sheet, January 2006).

The World Bank is financing several national education programmes in Afghanistan, including the Rehabilitating Primary Schools with Community Participation Program, the Emergency Education Rehabilitation and Development Project (USD15 million grant) and the Education Quality Improvement Program (EQUIP; USD35 million grant). Nuristan is not included in any of these programmes and projects.

The World Food Programme (WFP). WFP provides food supplies for Food for Training (FFT) schemes for vulnerable students and teachers in Nuristan. At the request of the government, projects will be implemented and monitored by local communities as much as possible. Community Development Councils (CDCs) and local shuras will increasingly be key partners to WFP in Food for Training schemes.

During 2006, an estimated 1,300 extremely poor persons in Nuristan will receive assistance through special food schemes. In addition, nearly 28,000 school children studying in Grades One to Six will be provided with nutritionally fortified biscuits on a regular basis, to increase student enrolment and attendance.

Moreover, an estimated 7,200 school girls will receive take-home rations of vegetable oil in 2006. These rations have proven an effective method of encouraging families to send their daughters to school. Also, an estimated 100 teachers who agree to move to remote parts of Nuristan will receive on the job training and monthly rations of vegetable oil.

In cooperation with the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Women's Affairs and UNICEF, food aid will be provided to some 1,650 women trainees attending literacy and life skill classes in 2006 (WFP information provided by Jackie Dent, WFP, Kabul, 16 March 2006).

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"… the conditions for educational development in Afghanistan, especially in terms of improving quality, do not look promising. There is no shared vision of the problems and priorities facing the education sector. There appears to be no prominent champion of reform at either the national or provincial levels, and there is a remarkable degree of complacency with the status quo. The highly centralised administration of education does not encourage innovation, and tight expenditure controls at all levels almost dictate an inefficient use of scarce resources."

From A Guide to Government in Afghanistan, AREU and The World Bank, 2004



Nuristani children waiting for a better future. Photo: Axiom Film

ACRONYMS, CURRENCY AND FISCAL YEAR

ACRONYMS

ACBAR	Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief
ACC	Asmat Construction Company
ACCN	Abdul Manen Construction Company for Nuristan
ACM	Anti Coalition Militant
ADB	Asian Development Bank
AG BAS-Ed	Afghan German Basic Education (also written AGBE)
AGE	Anti Government Elements
AIMS	Afghanistan Information Management Service
AMI	Aide Médicale Internationale
ANA	Afghan National Army
ANSO	Afghanistan Non-Governmental Organisations Security Office
APIF	Afghanistan Project Implementation Facility
ARCS	Afghan Red Crescent Society
ARDA	Afghan Rehabilitation and Development Association
AREU	Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit
ARTF	Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund
ATA/AP	Anti Tuberculosis Association/Afghanistan Programme
BAAG	British Agencies Afghanistan Group
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BHC	Basic Health Centre
BPHS	Basic Package of Health Services
CF	Coalition Forces
CGA	Construction Group of Afghanistan
CGAP	Consultative Group to Assist the Poor
CHC	Comprehensive Health Centre
CHW	Community Health Worker
CJTF-180	Coalition Joint Task Force-180
COPE	Community Organised Primary Education
CSO	Central Statistics Office
DACAAR	Danish Committee for Aid to Afghan Refugees
DFID	Department for International Development
EC	European Commission
EQUIP	Education Quality Improvement Programme
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
FP	Facilitating Partner
HARDO	Haidary Afghanistan Reconstruction and Development Organisation
HCA	Help Coordination Association
HCC	Hanif Construction Company
HIG	Hezb-e-Islami Gulbuddin
HRW	Human Rights Watch
IAM	International Assistance Mission
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IMC	International Medical Corps
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
IWPR	Institute for War and Peace Reporting
JCC	Jamalzi Construction Company
JEMB	Joint Electoral Management Body
KRC	Khatiz Reconstruction Company
MCC	Muslim Construction Company
MCU	Mohammad Nasir Construction Company
MoPW	Ministry of Public Works
MRRD	Ministry of Rehabilitation and Rural Development
NAC	Norwegian Afghanistan Committee
NACC	Naqilo Aziz Construction Company
NCA	Norwegian Church Aid

NCO	Neshagam Construction Organization
NF	Nooristan Foundation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NPO	Norwegian Project Office
NRVA	National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment
NSP	National Solidarity Programme
OEF	Operation Enduring Freedom
ORAS	Opium Rapid Assessment Survey
OTF	On the Frontier (USAID)
PCB	Nuristan Provincial Coordinating Board
PCC	Pronce Construction Company
PMS	Peshawar-kai Medical Services (a Japanese NGO)
PRT	Provincial Reconstruction Team
RAH	Reconstruction Company of Hendokosh
RPG	Rocket Propelled Grenade
RRAA	Rural Rehabilitation Association for Afghanistan
SCA	Swedish Committee for Afghanistan
SCCA	Saleh Construction Company for Afghanistan
SDHCO	Social Development and Health Care Organisation
Sida	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environmental Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund (also written UNPF)
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organisation

CURRENCY EQUIVALENT

Currency Unit = Afghani (Afs)
US $1 = ~50 Afs (2005 Average)

GOVERNMENT FISCAL YEAR

21 March – 20 March
2003/04 = 1382
2004/05 = 1383
2005/06 = 1384

Appendix 1

In Nuristan, Heavy Reliance on Herbal Remedies

MEHTARLAM, Feb 21 (Pajhwok Afghan News): Ground-breaking pharmaceutical research notwithstanding, herbal remedies continue to retain currency in western districts of the remote eastern province of Nuristan.

"In addition to food items, herbs and roots too are available here," says Mansoor, sitting in front of his small shop in Nangraj district, which has no road link with Nuristan's central and eastern parts.

Given the far-flung location of Nangraj and Do Aab districts, residents have no options but to be content with conventional treatments based on herbs. Even in the 21st century, lament dwellers of the Afghan countryside, they remain deprived of basic health facilities.

An inhabitant of Nangraj's Parila village, Mansur has been eking out a living by selling groceries and herbs for the last 25 years. In the absence of health clinics, people have to purchase plants and roots - fetched from nearby mountains - for use in herbal remedies.

Adds Mansur the seriously sick are taken to Mehtarlam (Laghman) or Jalalabad (Nangarhar) - but not before 12 hours of agony and discomfiture - while people with common diseases has recourse to herbal drugs, which have their own effects and side-effects.

A plant known as *darookar* that grows in Bamyan and Nuristan amazingly relieves joints pain as well as stomach disorders. A small dose of it, when pasted, can be wonderful cure for the two ailments among grown-ups. It can be fatal to minors with the same complaints, nevertheless.

Sher Agha, a shopkeeper in the Ganda Labook locality of Nangraj, explains herbs have a tremendous culinary as well as medicinal value. Aloes, chebulic, fennel, plantago, chaste leaves, flavonoids, mugwort, yarrow, golden-seal, camphor, wild alliums, arnica, rosemary, aconite, agrimony, barberry, black birch, castor bean plant, catnip, dandelion, elecampane, everfew, foxglove, ginkgo, golden ragwort, Indian cucumber, lobelia, eddo, star herb, ungoozeh, bee balm and tetterwort are but a few to name.

Janat Mohammad of Noor Gram village, resentful of non-existent health cover, charges even the incumbent government does not treat them like humans. "We are yet to be provided with essential services and hence the alarmingly high infant mortality rate in the province."

Self-medication is another cause for concern, with uneducated people taking the *Profen* tablet for headaches and other kinds of pain, says Mullah Jan from Do Aab district.

He continues: "In fact, we draw on our instinct in dealing with various diseases, using the same domestic recipes for diarrhea, cough, fever and infertility. And the critically ill are made to wear ox hide or offal!"

On the other hand, Mansur is all praise for home-made medicines. He was blessed with the first baby seven years after his marriage. The herbalist's wife received infertility treatment from Afghan and Pakistani doctors for a long time. "My spouse, however, gave birth to a baby after using herbs."

For their part, doctors do acknowledge the immense value of herbs. In the same breath, however, they warn some plants and roots could be fatal. Dr. Ashiqullah Qazizada argues *darookar* and *gosht-i-zamini* are poisonous plants that damage the liver. He maintains some blissfully ignorant even administer opium as a tranquilizer to their children.

He suggests the Public Health Ministry launch a campaign in the region, whose conservative dwellers view polio and tetanus vaccines with suspicion for reasons best known to them and consider hospital delivery a matter of shame.

There is a growing need, he insists, for educating people on the use of medicines, the hazards associated with self-medication and over-reliance on herbs.

NURISTAN PROVINCE



Districts in Nuristan in 2006. Other maps in this survey show district borders no longer valid.



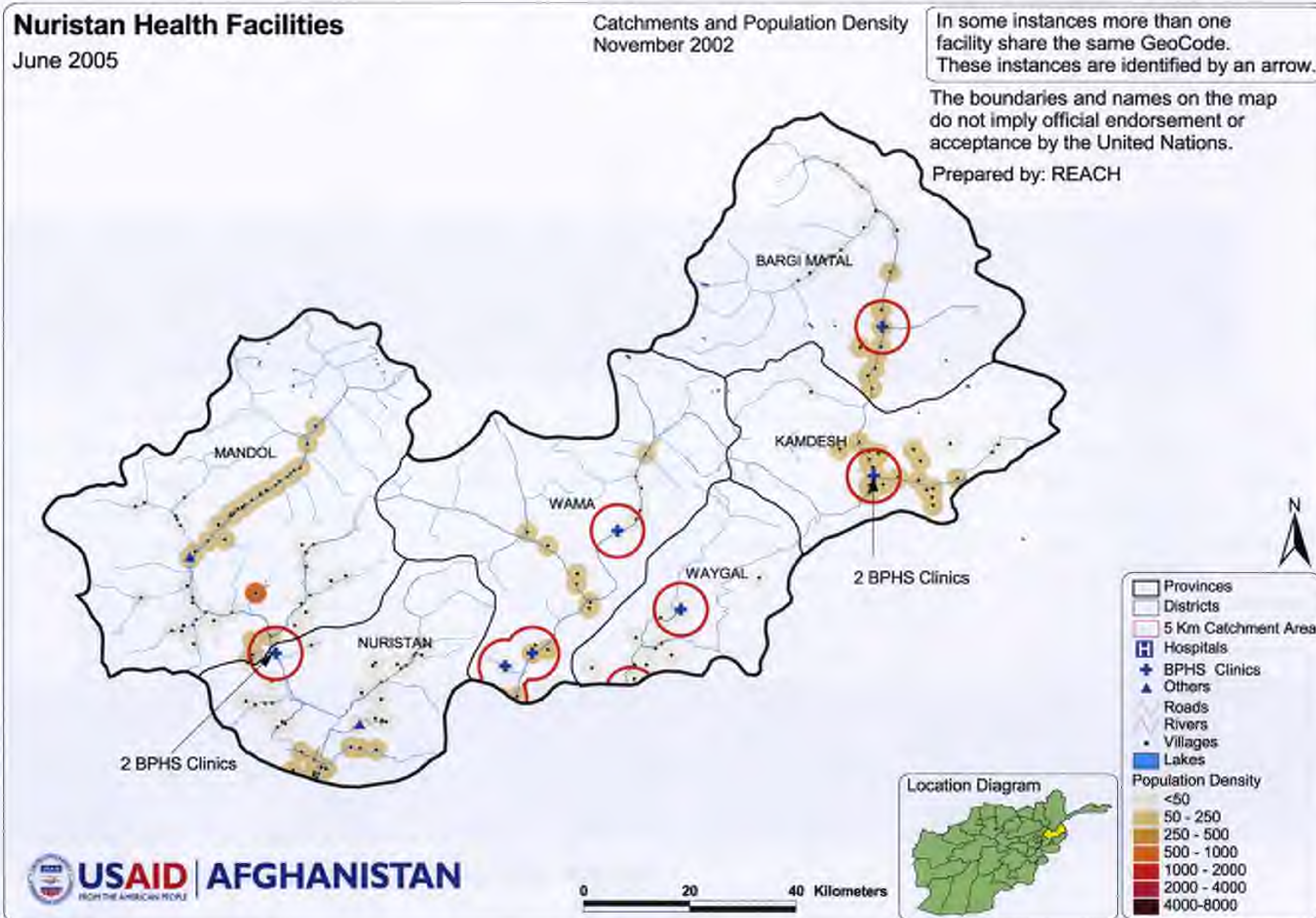
Dismissive of Qazizada's suggestion, the 60-year-old Abdul Ali from the Parisa village of Nangraj remarks in keeping with ossified Pakhtun customs, *khaza ya da kore da au ya da gore da* (a woman has either to stay confined to home or the grave). To him, it's plain dishonour taking your wife to the doctor at the time of delivery.

Speaking to this news agency, Nangraj district chief Engineer Nawroz deplores the persistent dearth of health facilities. He urges charitable organisations to help his bailiwick in areas of health education and training, and assures them of full security.

Dr. Wadudullah, Laghman's public health director, admits there is a whole host of health problems haunting the region. He contends female medics are unwilling to work in far-off districts.

Reported by Abdul Moeed Hashmi

Translated & edited by S. Mudassir Ali Shah


Nuristan Health Facilities
June 2005
Catchments and Population Density
November 2002
In some instances more than one facility share the same GeoCode. These instances are identified by an arrow.
The boundaries and names on the map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.
Prepared by: REACH
BARGI MATAL
KAMDESH
MANDOL
WAMA
WAYGAL
NURISTAN
2 BPHS Clinics
2 BPHS Clinics
N
Provinces
Districts
5 Km Catchment Area
Hospitals
BPHS Clinics
Others
Roads
Rivers
Villages
Lakes
Population Density
<50
50 - 250
250 - 500
500 - 1000
1000 - 2000
2000 - 4000
4000-8000
Location Diagram
0 20 40 Kilometers
USAID | AFGHANISTAN
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

CLINIC PROJECTS SUMMARY STATUS – as at 06th September, 2005

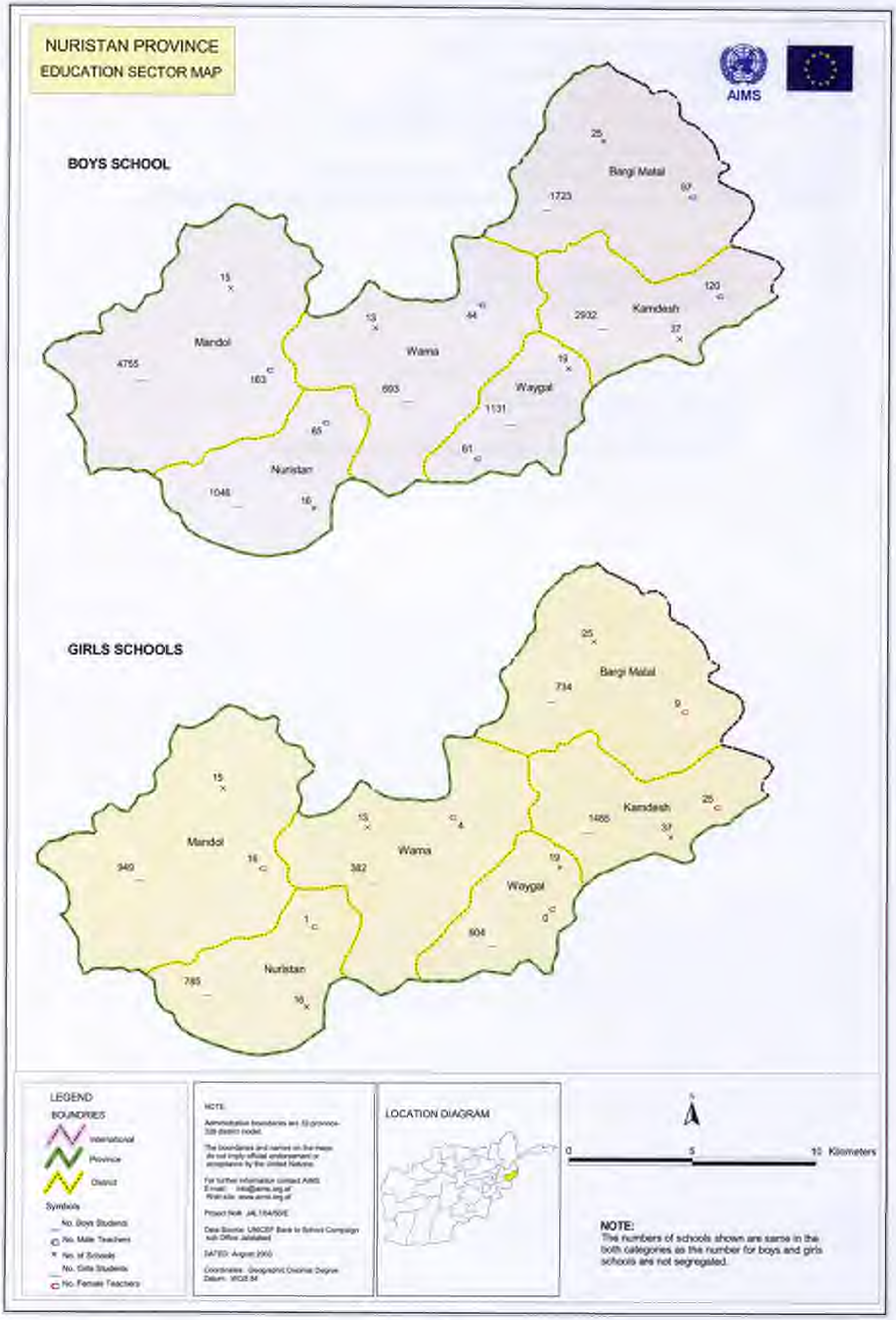
Province	USAID No.	District	Site	No.	Basic / Comprehensive	Contractor	Supervisor	GPS Coordinates	Actual Start Date	Estimated/Actual Finish Date	% Complete		Current Progress %	Construction Problems	Security Problems
											Last Week	This Week			
Nuristan	C295	Paroon	Pashaky	16	CHC	RAH	Nasir	35 19 51.67N 70 54 12.30E	20-Aug-04	30-Nov-05	0	2	34%	Work is started by new design & contractor	Insecure travel
	C296	Wamah	Wamah	14	BHC	RAH	Nasir	35 05 15.81N 70 44 1.89 E	20-Aug-04	30- Sep -05	1	2	83%	The work is on going	Insecure travel
	C297	Bargmatal	Bargimatal (absi)	13	CHC	CGA	Nasir	35 46 22.74N 71 20 41.45E	15-Aug-04	30- Nov- 05	0	0	38%	Due to heavy flood the road is destroyed and blocked No work.	Insecure travel
	C298	Kamidish	Paprook valley	17	BHC	ARDA	Nasir	35 32 19.36N 71 18 31.74E	15-Aug-04	30- Nov- 05	0	0	25%	Due to heavy flood the road is destroyed and blocked No work.	Insecure area
	C299	Nangrash	Nangrach	15	CHC	HARDO	Nasir	34 56 30.77N 70 22 38.59E	15-Aug-04	30- Sep- 05	1	1	67%	Work ongoing default penalty clause letter issued	Insecure area
Total Clinics Construction Contracts Cost															
Contingency															
Management and Fee															
TOTAL COST															

Schools

NACC	Naqilo Aziz Construction Company.
HCC	Hanif Construction Company
MCU	Mohammad Nasir Construction Company
SCCA	Saleh Construction Company for Afghanistan
PCC	Pronce Construction Company
ACCN	Abdul Manen Construction Company for Nuristan
HARDO	Haidary Afghanistan Reconstruction and Development Organization
JCC	Jamalzi Construction Company
KRC	Khatiz Reconstruction Company
ACC	Asmat Construction Company
NCO	Neshagam Construction Organization

Clinics

RAH	Reconstruction Company of Hendokosh
MCC	Muslim Construction Company
CGA	Construction Group of Afghanistan
ARDA	Afghan Rehabilitation and Development Association


NURISTAN PROVINCE
EDUCATION SECTOR MAP
AIMS
BOYS SCHOOL
Bargi Matal
25
1723
97
Mandol
15
4755
163
Wama
13
84
693
Kamdesh
120
2932
37
Waygal
19
1131
61
Nuristan
65
1046
16
GIRLS SCHOOLS
Bargi Matal
25
734
9
Mandol
15
949
16
Wama
15
4
382
Kamdesh
25
1466
37
Waygal
19
0
604
Nuristan
1
785
16
LEGEND
BOUNDRIES
International
Province
District
Symbols
No. Boys Students
No. Male Teachers
No. of Schools
No. Girls Students
No. Female Teachers
LOCATION DIAGRAM
0
5
10 Kilometers
NOTE:
The numbers of schools shown are same in the both categories as the number for boys and girls schools are not segregated.

SCHOOL PROJECTS SUMMARY STATUS – as at 06th September, 2005

Province	USAID.No	Districts	Site	No.	Type / Classrooms / Hot/Cold Climate	Contractor	Supervisor	GPS Coordinates	Actual Start Date	Estimated / Actual Finish Date	% Complete		Current Progress %	Construction Problems	Security Problems
											Last Week	This Week			
	S284A	Kamdesh	Kamdish	36	9,C	NACC	Eng. Nasir	35 24 31 90 N 70 20 28 36 E	27-Jul-04	30-Sept-05	0	0	91%	Work is on going	Insecure area
	S285A	Barge Matal	Chapo	37	9,C	HCC	Eng. Nasir ,	35 35 36 82 N 71 18 59 87 E	25-Jul-04	30-Oct-05	1	1	77%	Work is on going	Insecure area
	S286A	Central	Shtivy	32	9,H	MCU	Eng. Nasir	35 26 57,35 N 070 55 56,80 E 2800m	26-Jul-04	30-Sept-05	0	1	91%	Work is ongoing	Insecure Travel
	S287A	Wama	Bar Kordar	33	9,H	SCCA	Eng. Nasir	N 35001340 E70045840	22-Aug-04	30-Oct-05	0	1	65%	Work is ongoing	Insecure travel
	S288A	Center	Pronce	34	9,H	PCC	Eng. Nasir	35 25 12 N 070 55 25,55 E 2754m	26-Jul-04	30-Sept-05	0	1	91%	Work is on going	Insecure travel
	S289A	Center	Dewa	35	9,H	ACCN	Eng. Nasir	35 23 57,66 N 70 55 51,58 E 2685m	25-Jul-04	30-Sept-05	0	0	92%	Work is ongoing	Insecure travel
Nuristan	S290A	Barge Matal	Neek Mok (seedabad)	38	10,C	HARDO	Eng. Nasir	35 37 76 N 71 19 52 04 E	26-Jul-04	30-Sept-05	0	0	88%	No work	Insecure area
	S291A	Barge Matal	Barge Matal	39	9,C	HARDO	Eng. Nasir	35 40 23 72 N 71 21 38 18 E	28-Jul-04	30-Octt-05	1	1	77%	Work is ongoing	Insecure area
	S292A	Kamdesh	Goverdish	40	6,C	JCC	Eng. Nasir	35 23 57 74 N 71 34 50 59 E	24-Jul-04	30-Octt-05	1	1	82%	Work is ongoing	Insecure area
	S293A	Kamdesh	Pati Gal	41	10,C	NCO	Eng. Nasir	GPS does not connect there	23-Jul-04	30-Sept-05	0	1	93%	Work is ongoing	Insecure area
	S294A	Center	Pashki	43	9,H	KRC	Eng. Nasir	-	17-Aug-04	30-Nov 05	8	7	48%	Work is ongoing	Insecure travel
	S294B	Kamdesh	Kamo & Merdish	42	9,C	ACC	Eng. Nasir	35 24 29 08 N 71 24 38 52 E	24-Jul-04	30-Sept-05	1	1	82%	Work is ongoing	Insecure area
	S022	Murgab	Joma-e-shahid	48	C	SHD	Eng. Aziz	35 46 31.48 N 63 09 27.00 E A386	01-Oct-04	15-May-05	40	10	100%	Handed Over	
Total Schools Construction Contracts Cost															
Contingency															

Appendix 6

LIST OF CONTACTS

ACBAR	Ms Anja de Beer, Director, Kabul
Afghan Aid	Mr Mugtaba, Manager, Kabul
	Mr Sher Afzal, District Team Leader, Barg-e-Matal
	Mr Mohd Omar, Provincial Administrator, Nuristan
AG BAS-Ed	Mr Najeebullah, Director, Want
AIMS	Mr Abdul Wali Ahadi, GIS Specialist, Kabul
	Ms Hasiba Jalali, Customer Services Assistant, Kabul
ANSO	Mr Christian Willach, Operations Coordinator, Kabul
AREU	Mr Paul Fishstein, Director, Kabul
	Mr Royce Wiles, Coordinator, Information Resources, Kabul
ARIC/ACBAR	Ms Nancy Hatch Dupree, Senior Consultant, Kabul/Peshawar
CSO	Mr Abdul Rashed Falchri, Director General, Kabul
DACAAR	Mr Shah Wali, Deputy Programme Manager, Kabul
HRW	Mr Saman Zia-Zarifi, Deputy Director, New York
IAM/NOOR	Mr Rob Antonucci, Provincial Ophthalmic Care Director, Kabul
	Ms Hannelore Stein, Programme Officer, Kabul
JEMB	Mr Samiullah Taza, Member, Kabul
Ministry of Defence	HE Yusuf Nuristani, First Deputy Minister, Kabul
Ministry of Public Health	Dr Partamin, Global Fund, Kabul
	Dr Ghulam Rahimi, Health Adviser, Kabul
MRRD	Eng Salim Qayum, Director of Programme Management Office, Kabul
	Mr Asif Rahimi, Chief Coordinator, National Solidarity Programme, Kabul
NAC	Mr Sultan Mohammad, Administration Manager, Kabul
	Dr Esmatullah Ismat, former Health Manager, Waigal, Nuristan
NCA	Mr Jalaluddin Akramy, Senior Programme Officer, Kabul
	Ms Beate Fasting, Programme Coordinator, Kabul
OTF/USAID	Mr Mike Brennan, Chief of Party, Kabul
PRT/ISAF	Mr Magnus Bratt, Lieutenant Colonel, ISAF, Kunduz
PRT/OEF	Mr Chris Corsten, Captain, Nangarhar PRT, Jalalabad
	Mr Robert Dasher, Staff Sergeant, Civil Affairs Team, Laghman PRT, Mehtarlam
	Mr Richard L Dixon, Jr., Major, 492nd Civil Affairs Battalion, Kunar PRT, Asadabad
SCA	Many staff and board members, including
	Mr Jorgen Holmstrom, Regional Director, Kabul
	Mr Khodaidad, Project staff, Aranz/Jalalabad
	Dr Bengt Kristiansson, Secretary General, Stockholm/Kabul
	Ms Ulrika Lehmann, Development Worker, Kabul
	Dr Ahmed Abd El Rahman, Senior Health Advisor, Kabul
	Mr Safdar Raja, NSP Coordinator, Kabul
	Mr Zemarai Saqib, RAD Programme Coordinator, Kabul
	Mr Carl Schonmeyr, Board Member, Stockholm
	Mr Hakan Torngard, Community Organisation Coordinator, Kabul
SDHCO	Dr Sayed Noorullah, Chief Executive, Kabul
Sida	Ms Janet Vahamaki, Education Programme Officer, Stockholm

UNAMA	Eng Faridullah Farid, Programme Officer, Kabul
UNDP	Ms Shabnam Mallick, Programme Officer, Gender & Disability, Kabul
UNHCR	Ms. Nooria Sadaat, Programme Officer, Kabul
UNICEF	Mr Edward Carwardine, Head of Public Information, Kabul
	Eng. Mohammad Ibrahim, Assistant Project Officer, Out Post Nuristan, Jalalabad
	Dr Sayed Mohammad Saeed, Programme Officer, Jalalabad
UNODC	Eng Nazir Ahmadshah, National Project Coordinator, Kabul
	Mr Hakan Demirbuken, Illicit Crop Monitoring Regional Expert, Kabul
UNOPS	Mr Sogol Akef, Engineer Plans, UNOPS/USAID Secondary and District Centre Roads, Kabul
	Mr Stephen Brent Appleton, Programme Manager, UNOPS/ USAID Secondary and District Centre Roads, Kabul
	Mr Ronald Macdonald, Programme Manager, UNOPS/APIF, Schools and Clinics Programme, Jalalabad
	Mr Shane Middleton, Regional Engineer, UNOPS/USAID Secondary and District Roads, Jalalabad
	Mr Guna Raj Niraula, Project Manager, NEEPRA/MRRD Section, Jalalabad
USAID	See UNOPS
WFP	Ms Jackie Dent, Public Information Officer, Kabul
World Bank	Mr Asger Christensen, Senior Operations Officer, Washington, D.C.
	Ms Nancy Zhao, Operations Adviser, Kabul
OTHER	Mr Borje Almqvist, Journalist, Stockholm
	Mr Lennart Berggren, Photographer, Linkoping
	Ms Inger Boesen, Anthropologist, Copenhagen
	Mr Habibullah Djenah, Nuristani resource person, Stockholm
	Mr Najib Djenah, Nuristani resource person, Stockholm
	Prof. Max Klimburg, University of Vienna, Vienna
	Nuristani students in Kabul
	Governor Mohammad Tamim Nuristani, Governor of Nuristan, Kabul/Parun
	Mr Omar Sami Taza, Student, Kabul

Appendix 7

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GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Area:	**9,225 square kilometres** (AIMS* 2004) or **9,942 square kilometres** (Central Statistics Office, CSO, 2005). According to CSO, the district of Ghazi Abad is now part of the province of Kunar, not any longer Nuristan. This is a controversial issue. Prominent Nuristanis claim that Ghazi Abad is part of Nuristan, both culturally and historically.
Area – comparative:	Afghanistan covers 647,500 sq.km Sweden 450,000 sq.km Kunduz 8,040 sq.km Wardak 8,938 sq.km
Boundaries:	Chitral district in the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) in Pakistan; and Kunar, Laghman, Parwan and Badakhshan provinces in Afghanistan; clock-wise. The mountainous Nuristani-Pakistani border is approximately 100 kilometres long.
Latitude:	Between 35 and 36 degrees Northern Latitude; Parun, the provincial centre, is located on the same latitude as Tokyo in Japan, Cyprus, northern Algeria and Los Angeles in California.
Longitude:	Between 70 and 72 degrees Eastern Longitude; Parun, the provincial centre, is located on the same longitude as Tasjkent in Uzbekistan.
Mountain range:	**The Hindu Kush mountain range**, with the highest peak in Nuristan about **6,300 metres** above sea level. Most of the mountain passes are around 4,700m. They are closed during the winter and communication with the outside world is cut off in many parts of Nuristan from late October till March.
Rivers:	The main rivers are **the Bashgal in the east**, the **Pech in the centre** and **the Alingar/the Ramgal in the west**. They have a great many subsidiary streams pouring into them.
Terrain:	Rocky, deep, narrow and steep-sided valleys, and rugged, high mountain ridges.
Valleys:	The three main valleys are the **Bashgal** (in the east), the **Waigal** (in the south/centre) and the **Ramgal** (in the west). They are separated by high mountain passes of 4,000 to 4,600 metres.The more southern valleys are lower in altitude.
Vegetation:	Evergreen forests, alpine steppes and glaciers. See also Flora, and Forests in Chapter 2, Basic Facts and Summary.

* AIMS (Afghanistan Information Management System) of UNDP produces standard and custom geographic information systems (GIS), and provides technical assistance to organisations on design of databases and GIS systems. AIMS is based in Kabul, with regional representation in the UNAMA offices. AIMS datasets and maps are free of charge through its web site (www.aims.org.af).

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1 INTRODUCTION AND METHODS

The Swedish Committee for Afghanistan (SCA) has been awarded a contract by the Ministry of Public Health to implement **the Basic Package of Health Services (BPHS)** in the province of Nuristan. This, in fact, means that SCA now has the responsibility for the implementation of all health care in the province. To provide the SCA Board, management, and middle-level staff with an updated and broad picture of the current development situation in Nuristan, I was asked to prepare a provincial survey of Nuristan.

Basically, the survey is a desk study. Sources of information are presented in **Appendix 7, References**. In addition, a large number of smaller articles and news items from the web are quoted, with reference given in the text.

The survey is also based on meetings in Kabul from 21 October to 8 November 2005. Among the interviewed persons were Nuristani families, students and officials in Kabul, SCA staff, government staff, United Nations and World Bank staff, NGO representatives and ordinary women and men. In addition, Nuristanis living in Sweden have been interviewed on several occasions. A lot of information in the survey comes from extensive e-mail correspondence with persons working in or for Nuristan. See **Appendix 6, List of Contacts.**

The information on population by district and gender is based on official data received from the Director General of the Central Statistics Office (CSO) in Kabul in November 2005. In the absence of a real census and other reliable sources of information, **the statistics in this survey should be seen as rough estimates of limited reliability**.

Many persons have been helpful in providing data for this survey. Among my new Nuristani friends, I would like to give special thanks to Mr Samiullah Taza (designer of a Nuristani written language, among other accomplishments) from Waigal and his son Mr Omar Sami Taza, and Mr Habibullah Djenah (a former Senator, among other duties) from Barg-e-Matal and his son Mr Najib Djenah. Mr Carl Schonmeyr and Mr Borje Almqvist, two Swedish resource persons on Afghan affairs with long experience of the country, have also given valuable inputs to the survey. Mr Carl Schonmeyr visited Nuristan in the mid-1960s as the first UNICEF Representative in Afghanistan, and Mr Borje Almqvist walked through Nuristan in the mid-1980s as a journalist. Last but certainly not least, Dr Bengt Kristiansson, Secretary General of SCA, has given inspiring guidance and valuable comments on the first draft of the survey.

This survey has been completed under great time pressure. Due to circumstances beyond my control, it proved impossible for me to visit Nuristan before the completion of the survey, in order to meet people of the province and, most particularly, to have personal meetings with Nuristani women and their children. I can only express my regrets. At the same time, I sincerely hope to be able to visit Nuristan one day and to familiarise myself with this legendary, beautiful, remote and difficult part of Afghanistan.

With regard to the position of women within the family and in the local community, there is important information to be collected among women in Nuristan, and to be analysed before an updated picture can be presented. Little is known about the influences of conservative Islamist thinking on Nuristani society. It is important, in particular for a BPHS programme, that this gap in our knowledge can be closed as early as possible.

2 BASIC FACTS AND SUMMARY

Some basic facts about Nuristan and a brief summary of the survey are here presented in alphabetical order:

Agriculture and livestock: The soil is rocky and, and cultivable land is scarce. Tiny fields are served by a complex system of carefully maintained irrigation canals. Most of the water comes from melting snow on the mountains. Crop rotation and manuring is practised. The growing season in the south is up to seven months, while in the north it may be as short as three months.

Women do most of the agricultural work. Wheat and millet are grown. In recent years, the cultivation of maize has been expanding at the cost of millet. Maize is easier to grow, and not so easily beaten down by rain. Other crops include pumpkins and squash, red beans, potatoes, lentils, tomatoes, hazelnuts, pine nuts, walnuts, mulberries, grapes, pomegranates, apples and apricots. Men herd the livestock, mainly goats, but also sheep and dairy cattle. Large quantities of milk, ghee (a kind of butter) and cheese are produced. Chickens are raised in and around the homestead. Honey is produced mainly in the southern valleys (Cita, 1986).

Calendar: Both the calendar year and the agricultural year begin in spring, approximately at the vernal equinox when all livestock leave the winter stables and move into the first pastures. Almost every village in Nuristan has its own calendar, built on the lunar system and adjusted to local circumstances. The first six months are related to agriculture, and the next six months are related to animal husbandry. The twenty-four hours day-and-night are divided into five parts: early morning, morning, noon, evening and night.

Caste/class system (Bari): In most (but not all) villages there are three distinct castes/classes: the land-owning livestock-herding elite (the vast majority; in Waigal called Atrozan), a class of skilled hereditary craftsmen (Bari), and a class of relatively unskilled hereditary craftsmen (sometimes also called Sewala). Craftsmen and their families do not, as a rule, own livestock and they own but little arable land. Robertson (1896) had a theory that Baris are partly the descendants of an ancient people subjugated by the Kafirs when they first entered the country, and partly descendants of prisoners taken in war.

Baris/Sewalas are not allowed to eat together with the land-owning elite. Inter-marriages between the elite and Baris/Sewalas are strictly prohibited. Bari/Sewala children and youth have a much lower school attendance than other Nuristani children and youth. Baris/Sewalas are excluded from competing for higher status, and they live in separate quarters of the village. In pre-Muslim times, the Baris/Sewalas were slaves. They were bought and sold; the price was 120 goats per slave (Jones, 1974). Slavery was abolished by King Amanullah in the 1920s.

Clans/lineages: In addition to these caste/class divisions, Nuristani society is sub-divided into clans, and each of these contains various lineages, which in turn are further sub-divided into branches composed of closely related families. Edelberg & Jones (1979) write: "These groups are important, as they provide the basis for social, economic, and political organization in Nuristan. They determine where one's allegiance lies, who one's enemies are, who one cooperates with, and who one competes with." Jones (1974) writes: "In Waigal Valley it is not uncommon for a man to be able to name twenty generations of his ancestors, though none of my informants there could seriously rival those elders in the Bashgal Valley who provided me with genealogies that were as much as 45 generations in depth."

Clan/community feuds: Clan and/or community feuds, often about water rights, arable land, theft of livestock, grazing rights and/or abduction of girls and wives, within valleys and between valleys can be violent. When there is a feud involving a whole village, then everyone in the village is expected to provide both moral and material support. For example, a dispute over irrigation canals between two villages in Waigal resulted in six people being killed and thirteen injured in 2004. In Kamdesh, a violent feud between the Kushtuz/Kantozi and the Kamdesh/Kamozi clans over arable land and water resources has been going on for generations. Villages have been burnt, crops destroyed and many people have been killed. Up to 600 Kushtuz families have been forced to leave their homes. They are now temporarily living in Barg-e-Matal, Ghazi Abad and other places in Afghanistan. Several local jirgas and UNAMA have tried to mediate, only with temporary success so far. See also Refugees/IDPs below.

Climate: The climate of Nuristan is continental dry with seasonal extremes of heat and cold. It varies with altitude, and benefits from the Indian summer monsoon. Most villages in Nuristan are located between 1,500 m and 2,500 m above sea level. A remarkable absence of wind at this high altitude results in relative comfort for the inhabitants also at low temperatures. In winter, temperatures rarely drop below -10°C. The summer maximum temperature seldom exceeds +30°C. However, in the upper valleys, eg Parun, it gets bitterly cold after the winter solstice.

There is plenty of snow in winter, and there is often a risk of snow avalanches. There are rain storms, including heavy thunder storms with hail, in spring. Flooding, especially in Waigal, is common. Summers and autumns are dry. Most of the water comes from melting snow on the surrounding mountains.

Disability: There are no reliable data on disabilities in Nuristan, and there are no services for the disabled. UNICEF (2005) estimates that 4.1 per cent of children 1-4 years old in Nuristan have at least one form of disability. Broken arms and legs are common. Poor or non-existent medical infrastructure means that many treatable cases end up as permanent impairments. Open fires and mines, still being planted in Kamdesh, also cause disabilities.